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THE CRIMES OF THE BORGIAS
AND OTHERS

Bourdet, del. *Lafond, sculp.*

CÆSAR BORGIA ESCAPING FROM THE CASTLE OF MEDINA DEL CAMPO

THE CRIMES OF THE BORGIAS

AND OTHERS

BY

ALEXANDRE DUMAS

WITH NINE ILLUSTRATIONS

NEW YORK
THE MACMILLAN COMPANY
1907

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INTRODUCTION

AN Oriental writer relates that when God had made the world He determined to give a master to His creation;—this to the great annoyance of Satan, who had watched Him at work and believed that the earth would be his. God formed man in His own image, transmitted life to him by touching his forehead with His finger, showed him Eden as his dwelling-place, named to him the animals that would be submissive to him, pointed out the fruits that would nourish him, and then departed to sow the millions of worlds that roll in space. Scarcely had He disappeared when Satan entered to take a near view of the man, who, fatigued by his creation, was asleep.

Satan examined all the details with a spiteful attention which was only augmented by the perfection of the parts and their harmony with each other, but could find no physical defect, for the Spirit of God watched over him. Satan was about to depart in despair of possessing the body and of ruining the soul, when it occurred to him to sound the man all over with his finger;—having reached the chest, he heard that it was hollow.

"Good," said Satan, "there is a void; I will fill it with passions."

It is the history of the passions instilled by Satan into the bosoms of certain notorious men and women of all ages that Dumas in his *Celebrated Crimes* offers to his readers.

The Borgias, the Cenci, Urbain Grandier, the Marchioness of Brinvilliers, Marchioness of Ganges, and the rest. What subjects for the pen of Dumas!

It is the Dumas of 1840 that we must picture to ourselves as the author of the book. Here is his literary and physical portrait sketched by a contemporary, H. de Villemessant, the founder of the *Figaro*:—

"To understand the prestige of Alexandre Dumas, one ought to carry oneself back to the epoch in which he held all Paris under the spell of his incomparable talent. Success, which is an accident in the life of a writer, was for him an everyday companion. All was prodigious in this writer, his imagination, his wit, his good humour, and his prodigality.

"In no epoch and among no people until then had been seen a writer monopolising success in all styles at once; dramas, comedies, romances of domestic life and of adventure, humorous tales and sensational stories, he had tried all with equal success. The public of the *Théâtre-Français* owed him delightful evenings, and so, no less, did the man in the street. He alone had found the means to arouse, to interest, or to amuse not only Paris and France, but the entire world. . . .

"In like manner, as the writer united in himself all the aptitudes, so the man was a sample of the physical perfection of many races. He had from the negro the crisp hair and thick lips, to which the European strain had imparted the acute and *spirituel* smile; from the Southern race he had vivacity of gesture and of speech; from the Northern, his solid structure and broad shoulders: with all this he possessed the elegance of the Frenchman. Nature had given him all, intelligence at the same time as physical strength, wit as well as health. Very tall at this period, and very thin, Alexandre Dumas was in his entirety the complete type of the *beau cavalier*. What was heavy in his features was lessened by the lustre of his blue eyes. The negro had been conquered by the civilised man. The impetuosities of an African blood were tempered by the elegance of European civilisation."

It was this man, then, whom a firm of publishers approached, about 1840, with a proposal for the writing of a huge work to be entitled *Celebrated Crimes*. Up to

that period, Dumas' greatest successes had been his dramas, *Henri III*, *Christine*, *Antony*, and *Richard Darlington*; his melodrama, *La Tour de Nesle*; his comedies, *Le Mari de la Veuve* and *Mdlle. de Belle Isle*; his delightful volumes of travel in Switzerland; his romance, *Pascal Bruno*; and, in a lesser degree, his *Chronique de France*, *Isabeau de Bavière*, which appeared in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*. His least successful book was *Gaule et France* (1833), a serious attempt at history composed after a course of reading during which he had found the ponderous tomes of MM. Mézeray, Velly, and Anquetil very dull. A little later, he studied the old Chronicles to his lasting profit, and, after writing *La Comtesse de Salisbury*, he produced his brilliant though very much "documented" romance, *Acté: a Tale of the Days of Nero*. It was perhaps on seeing the great success of *Acté*, issued in 1838–39, that the publishers came running with a contract for the *Crimes Célèbres*—a book to be published in parts, with steel engravings, and to be completed in eight volumes.

The French have always been fond of reading *causes célèbres*. From collections of them such as that made by Guy de Pittaval, it was but a step to the idea of a book of studies dealing with celebrated criminals—not merely in the manner of the *Newgate Calendar*, accounts of their trials and last dying speeches and confessions, but carefully studied and at the same time dramatic histories of their crimes in their conception and execution. Dumas, as a distinguished man of letters has pointed out, had two elements in his nature—the dramatist and the minute historian. By the union of these he infused a new spirit both into history and romance, vivifying the former while giving solidity to the latter. In writing the *Crimes Célèbres* he exhibited himself by turns as the thorough dramatic romancist and as the thorough historian. "Not a mere artist," says the critic of the *Celebrated Crimes*, "he has nevertheless in his historical tales been able at once to seize on those dramatic 'effects' which have so much distinguished his theatrical career, and to give those sharp and distinct

reproductions of character which alone can present to the reader the mind and spirit of an age; not a mere historian, he has nevertheless carefully consulted the original sources of information, has weighed testimonies, elicited theories, and, at the risk of tediousness, has interpolated the poetry of history with its most thorough prose. Had he been more of the artist, he would have paused ere he interrupted the chain of his narrative with the detailed history of a period, and we should have lost much of the curious and well-arranged information of the careful compiler. Had he been more of the historian, the vivid touches which impart such a charm to his writings, and give them a deeper truth than that which is conveyed by the mere record of names and dates, would have been wanting."

These reflections are entirely just. The success of the first part of the *Crimes Célèbres* on its publication in 1839 was instantaneous, and in France there has been ever since a demand for the complete work.

R. S. GARNETT

Fourdet. del. *Mdlle. Eugenie, sculp.*

THE BORGIAS

THE BORGIAS

THE BORGIAS

PROLOGUE

ON the 8th of April 1492, in a bedroom of the Carneggi Palace, about three miles from Florence, were three men grouped about a bed whereon a fourth lay dying.

The first of these three men, sitting at the foot of the bed, and half hidden, that he might conceal his tears, in the gold-brocaded curtains, was Ermolao Barbaro, author of the treatise *On Celibacy*, and of *Studies in Pliny*: the year before, when he was at Rome in the capacity of ambassador of the Florentine Republic, he had been appointed Patriarch of Aquileia by Innocent VIII.

The second, who was kneeling and holding one hand of the dying man between his own, was Angelo Poliziano, the Catullus of the fifteenth century, a classic of the lighter sort, who in his Latin verses might have been mistaken for a poet of the Augustan age.

The third, who was standing up and leaning against one of the twisted columns of the bed-head, following with profound sadness the progress of the malady which he read in the face of his departing friend, was the famous Pico della Mirandola, who at the age of twenty could speak twenty-two languages, and who had offered to reply in each of these languages to any seven hundred questions that might be put to him by the twenty most learned men in the whole world, if they could be assembled at Florence.

The man on the bed was Lorenzo the Magnificent, who at the beginning of the year had been attacked by a severe and deep-

seated fever, to which was added the gout, a hereditary ailment in his family. He had found at last that the draughts containing dissolved pearls which the quack doctor, Leoni di Spoleto, prescribed for him (as if he desired to adapt his remedies rather to the riches of his patient than to his necessities) were useless and unavailing, and so he had come to understand that he must part from those gentle-tongued women of his, those sweet-voiced poets, his palaces and their rich hangings; therefore he had summoned to give him absolution for his sins—in a man of less high place they might perhaps have been called crimes—the Dominican, Girolamo Francesco Savonarola.

It was not, however, without an inward fear, against which the praises of his friends availed nothing, that the pleasure-seeker and usurper awaited that severe and gloomy preacher by whose words all Florence was stirred, and on whose pardon henceforth depended all his hope for another world. Indeed, Savonarola was one of those men of stone, coming, like the statue of the *Commandante*, to knock at the door of a Don Giovanni, and in the midst of feast and orgy to announce that it is even now the moment to begin to think of Heaven. He had been born at Ferrara, whither his family, one of the most illustrious of Padua, had been called by Niccolo, Marchese d'Este, and at the age of twenty-three, summoned by an irresistible vocation, had fled from his father's house, and had taken the vows in the cloister of Dominican monks at Florence. There, where he was appointed by his superiors to give lessons in philosophy, the young novice had from the first to battle against the defects of a voice that was both harsh and weak, a defective pronunciation, and above all, the depression of his physical powers, exhausted as they were by too severe abstinence.

Savonarola from that time condemned himself to the most absolute seclusion, and disappeared in the depths of his convent, as if the slab of his tomb had already fallen over him. There, kneeling on the flags, praying unceasingly before a wooden crucifix, fevered by vigils and penances, he soon passed out of contemplation into ecstasy, and began to feel in himself

that inward prophetic impulse which summoned him to preach the reformation of the Church.

Nevertheless, the reformation of Savonarola, more reverential than Luther's, which followed about five-and-twenty years later, respected the thing while attacking the man, and had as its aim the altering of teaching that was human, not faith that was of God. He did not work, like the German monk, by reasoning, but by enthusiasm. With him logic always gave way before inspiration: he was not a theologian, but a prophet. Yet, although hitherto he had bowed his head before the authority of the Church, he had already raised it against the temporal power. To him religion and liberty appeared as two virgins equally sacred; so that, in his view, Lorenzo in subjugating the one was as culpable as Pope Innocent VIII in dishonouring the other. The result of this was that, so long as Lorenzo lived in riches, happiness, and magnificence, Savonarola had never been willing, whatever entreaties were made, to sanction by his presence a power which he considered illegitimate. But Lorenzo on his deathbed sent for him, and that was another matter. The austere preacher set forth at once, bareheaded and barefoot, hoping to save not only the soul of the dying man but also the liberty of the republic.

Lorenzo, as we have said, was awaiting the arrival of Savonarola with an impatience mixed with uneasiness; so that, when he heard the sound of his steps, his pale face took a yet more deathlike tinge, while at the same time he raised himself on his elbow and ordered his three friends to go away. They obeyed at once, and scarcely had they left by one door than the curtain of the other was raised, and the monk, pale, immovable, solemn, appeared on the threshold. When he perceived him, Lorenzo dei Medici, reading in his marble brow the inflexibility of a statue, fell back on his bed, breathing a sigh so profound that one might have supposed it was his last.

The monk glanced round the room as though to assure himself that he was really alone with the dying man; then he advanced with a slow and solemn step towards the bed.

Lorenzo watched his approach with terror; then, when he was close beside him, he cried—

"O my father, I have been a very great sinner!"

"The mercy of God is infinite," replied the monk; "and I come into your presence laden with the divine mercy."

"You believe, then, that God will forgive my sins?" cried the dying man, renewing his hope as he heard from the lips of the monk such unexpected words.

"Your sins and also your crimes, God will forgive them all," replied Savonarola. "God will forgive your vanities, your adulterous pleasures, your obscene festivals; so much for your sins. God will forgive you for promising two thousand florins reward to the man who should bring you the head of Dietisalvi, Nerone Nigi, Angelo Antinori, Niccolo Soderini, and twice the money if they were handed over alive; God will forgive you for dooming to the scaffold or the gibbet the son of Papi Orlandi, Francesco di Brisighella, Bernardo Nardi, Jacopo Frescobaldi, Amoretto Baldovinetti, Pietro Balducci, Bernardo di Bandino, Francesco Frescobaldi, and more than three hundred others whose names were none the less dear to Florence because they were less renowned; so much for your crimes." And at each of these names, which Savonarola pronounced slowly, his eyes fixed on the dying man, he replied with a groan which proved the monk's memory to be only too true. Then at last, when he had finished, Lorenzo asked in a doubtful tone—

"Then do you believe, my father, that God will forgive me everything, both my sins and my crimes?"

"Everything," said Savonarola, "but on three conditions."

"What are they?" asked the dying man.

"The first," said Savonarola, "is that you feel a complete faith in the power and the mercy of God."

"My father," replied Lorenzo eagerly, "I feel this faith in the very depths of my heart."

"The second," said Savonarola, "is that you give back the property of others which you have unjustly confiscated and kept."

"My father, shall I have time?" asked the dying man.

"God will give it to you," replied the monk.

Lorenzo shut his eyes, as though to reflect more at his ease; then, after a moment's silence, he replied—

"Yes, my father, I will do it."

"The third," resumed Savonarola, "is that you restore to the republic her ancient independence and her former liberty."

Lorenzo sat up on his bed, shaken by a convulsive movement, and questioned with his eyes the eyes of the Dominican, as though he would find out if he had deceived himself and not heard aright. Savonarola repeated the same words.

"Never! never!" exclaimed Lorenzo, falling back on his bed and shaking his head,—"never!"

The monk, without replying a single word, made a step to withdraw.

"My father, my father," said the dying man, "do not leave me thus: have pity on me!"

"Have pity on Florence," said the monk.

"But, my father," cried Lorenzo, "Florence is free, Florence is happy."

"Florence is a slave, Florence is poor," cried Savonarola, "poor in genius, poor in money, and poor in courage; poor in genius, because after you, Lorenzo, will come your son Piero; poor in money, because from the funds of the republic you have kept up the magnificence of your family and the credit of your business houses; poor in courage, because you have robbed the rightful magistrates of the authority which was constitutionally theirs, and diverted the citizens from the double path of military and civil life, wherein, before they were enervated by your luxuries, they had displayed the virtues of the ancients; and therefore, when the day shall dawn which is not far distant," continued the monk, his eyes fixed and glowing as if he were reading in the future, "whereon the barbarians shall descend from the mountains, the walls of our towns, like those of Jericho, shall fall at the blast of their trumpets."

"And do you desire that I should yield up on my death-

bed the power that has made the glory of my whole life?" cried Lorenzo dei Medici.

"It is not I who desire it; it is the Lord," replied Savonarola coldly.

"Impossible, impossible!" murmured Lorenzo.

"Very well; then die as you have lived!" cried the monk, "in the midst of your courtiers and flatterers; let them ruin your soul as they have ruined your body!" And at these words, the austere Dominican, without listening to the cries of the dying man, left the room as he had entered it, with face and step unaltered; far above human things he seemed to soar, a spirit already detached from the earth.

At the cry which broke from Lorenzo dei Medici when he saw him disappear, Ermolao, Poliziano, and Pico della Mirandola, who had heard all, returned into the room, and found their friend convulsively clutching in his arms a magnificent crucifix which he had just taken down from the bed-head. In vain did they try to reassure him with friendly words. Lorenzo the Magnificent only replied with sobs; and one hour after the scene which we have just related, his lips clinging to the feet of the Christ, he breathed his last in the arms of these three men, of whom the most fortunate—though all three were young—was not destined to survive him more than two years. "Since his death was to bring about many calamities," says Niccolo Macchiavelli, "it was the will of Heaven to show this by omens only too certain: the dome of the church of Santa Reparata was struck by lightning, and Roderigo Borgia was elected pope."

L. Boulanger, del. *N. Desmadryl, sculp.*

SAVONAROLA REFUSING ABSOLUTION TO LORENZO DE MEDICI

CHAPTER I

TOWARDS the end of the fifteenth century—that is to say, at the epoch when our history opens—the Piazza of St. Peter's at Rome was far from presenting so noble an aspect as that which is offered in our own day to anyone who approaches it by the Piazza dei Rusticucci.

In fact, the Basilica of Constantine existed no longer, while that of Michael Angelo, the masterpiece of thirty popes, which cost the labour of three centuries and the expense of two hundred and sixty millions, existed not yet. The ancient edifice, which had lasted for eleven hundred and forty-five years, had been threatening to fall in about 1440, and Nicholas V, artistic forerunner of Julius II and Leo X, had had it pulled down, together with the temple of Probus Anicius which adjoined it. In their place he had had the foundations of a new temple laid by the architects Rossellini and Battista Alberti; but some years later, after the death of Nicholas V, Paul II, the Venetian, had not been able to give more than five thousand crowns to continue the project of his predecessor, and thus the building was arrested when it had scarcely risen above the ground, and presented the appearance of a still-born edifice, even sadder than that of a ruin.

As to the piazza itself, it had not yet, as the reader will understand from the foregoing explanation, either the fine colonnade of Bernini, or the dancing fountains, or that Egyptian obelisk which, according to Pliny, was set up by the Pharaoh at Heliopolis, and transferred to Rome by Caligula, who set it up in Nero's Circus, where it remained till 1586. Now, as Nero's Circus was situated on the very ground where St. Peter's now stands, and the base of this obelisk

covered the actual site where the vestry now is, it looked like a gigantic needle shooting up from the middle of truncated columns, walls of unequal height, and half-carved stones.

On the right of this building, a ruin from its cradle, arose the Vatican, a splendid Tower of Babel, to which all the celebrated architects of the Roman school contributed their work for a thousand years: at this epoch the two magnificent chapels did not exist, nor the twelve great halls, the two-and-twenty courts, the thirty staircases, and the two thousand bed-chambers; for Pope Sixtus V, the sublime swineherd, who did so many things in a five years' reign, had not yet been able to add the immense building which on the eastern side towers above the court of St. Damasius; still, it was truly the old sacred edifice, with its venerable associations, in which Charlemagne received hospitality when he was crowned emperor by Pope Leo III.

All the same, on the 9th of August 1492, the whole of Rome, from the People's Gate to the Coliseum and from the Baths of Diocletian to the castle of Sant' Angelo, seemed to have made an appointment on this piazza: the multitude thronging it was so great as to overflow into all the neighbouring streets, which started from this centre like the rays of a star. The crowds of people, looking like a motley moving carpet, were climbing up into the basilica, grouping themselves upon the stones, hanging on the columns, standing up against the walls; they entered by the doors of houses and reappeared at the windows, so numerous and so densely packed that one might have said each window was walled up with heads. Now all this multitude had its eyes fixed on one single point in the Vatican; for in the Vatican was the Conclave, and as Innocent VIII had been dead for sixteen days, the Conclave was in the act of electing a pope.

Rome is the town of elections: since her foundation down to our own day—that is to say, in the course of nearly twenty-six centuries—she has constantly elected her kings, consuls, tribunes, emperors, and popes: thus Rome during the days of Conclave appears to be attacked by a strange fever which

drives everyone to the Vatican or to Monte Cavallo, according as the scarlet-robed assembly is held in one or the other of these two palaces: it is, in fact, because the raising up of a new pontiff is a great event for everybody; for, according to the average established in the period between St. Peter and Gregory XVI, every pope lasts about eight years, and these eight years, according to the character of the man who is elected, are a period either of tranquillity or of disorder, of justice or of venality, of peace or of war.

Never perhaps since the day when the first successor of St. Peter took his seat on the pontifical throne until the interregnum which now occurred, had so great an agitation been shown as there was at this moment, when, as we have shown, all these people were thronging on the Piazza of St. Peter and in the streets which led to it. It is true that this was not without reason; for Innocent VIII—who was called the father of his people because he had added to his subjects eight sons and the same number of daughters—had, as we have said, after living a life of self-indulgence, just died, after a death-struggle during which, if the journal of Stefano Infessura may be believed, two hundred and twenty murders were committed in the streets of Rome. The authority had then devolved in the customary way upon the Cardinal Camerlengo, who during the interregnum had sovereign powers; but as he had been obliged to fulfil all the duties of his office—that is, to get money coined in his name and bearing his arms, to take the fisherman's ring from the finger of the dead pope, to dress, shave, and paint him, to have the corpse embalmed, to lower the coffin after nine days' obsequies into the provisional niche where the last deceased pope has to remain until his successor comes to take his place and consign him to his final tomb; lastly, as he had been obliged to wall up the door of the Conclave and the window of the balcony from which the pontifical election is proclaimed, he had not had a single moment for busying himself with the police; so that the assassinations had continued in goodly fashion, and there were loud cries for an energetic hand which should

make all these swords and all these daggers retire into their sheaths.

Now the eyes of this multitude were fixed, as we have said, upon the Vatican, and particularly upon one chimney, from which would come the first signal, when suddenly, at the moment of the *Ave Maria*—that is to say, at the hour when the day begins to decline—great cries went up from all the crowd mixed with bursts of laughter, a discordant murmur of threats and raillery, the cause being that they had just perceived at the top of the chimney a thin smoke, which seemed like a light cloud to go up perpendicularly into the sky. This smoke announced that Rome was still without a master, and that the world still had no pope; for this was the smoke of the voting tickets which were being burned, a proof that the cardinals had not yet come to an agreement.

Scarcely had this smoke appeared, to vanish almost immediately, when all the innumerable crowd, knowing well that there was nothing else to wait for, and that all was said and done until ten o'clock the next morning, the time when the cardinals had their first voting, went off in a tumult of noisy joking, just as they would after the last rocket of a firework display; so that at the end of one minute nobody was there where a quarter of an hour before there had been an excited crowd, except a few curious laggards, who, living in the neighbourhood or on the very piazza itself, were less in a hurry than the rest to get back to their homes; again, little by little, these last groups insensibly diminished; for half-past nine had just struck, and at this hour the streets of Rome began already to be far from safe; then after these groups followed some solitary passer-by, hurrying his steps; one after another the doors were closed, one after another the windows were darkened; at last, when ten o'clock struck, with the single exception of one window in the Vatican where a lamp might be seen keeping obstinate vigil, all the houses, piazzas, and streets were plunged in the deepest obscurity.

At this moment a man wrapped in a cloak stood up like a ghost against one of the columns of the uncompleted basilica,

and gliding slowly and carefully among the stones which were lying about round the foundations of the new church, advanced as far as the fountain which formed the centre of the piazza, erected in the very place where the obelisk is now set up of which we have spoken already; when he reached this spot he stopped, doubly concealed by the darkness of the night and by the shade of the monument, and after looking around him to see if he were really alone, drew his sword, and with its point rapping three times on the pavement of the piazza, each time made the sparks fly. This signal, for signal it was, was not lost: the last lamp which still kept vigil in the Vatican went out, and at the same instant an object thrown out of the window fell a few paces off from the young man in the cloak: he, guided by the silvery sound it had made in touching the flags, lost no time in laying his hands upon it in spite of the darkness, and when he had it in his possession hurried quickly away.

Thus the unknown walked without turning round half-way along the Borgo Vecchio; but there he turned to the right and took a street at the other end of which was set up a Madonna with a lamp: he approached the light, and drew from his pocket the object he had picked up, which was nothing else than a Roman crown piece; but this crown unscrewed, and in a cavity hollowed in its thickness enclosed a letter, which the man to whom it was addressed began to read at the risk of being recognised, so great was his haste to know what it contained.

We say at the risk of being recognised, for in his eagerness the recipient of this nocturnal missive had thrown back the hood of his cloak, and as his head was wholly within the luminous circle cast by the lamp, it was easy to distinguish in the light the head of a handsome young man of about five or six and twenty, dressed in a purple doublet slashed at the shoulder and elbow to let the shirt come through, and wearing on his head a cap of the same colour with a long black feather falling to his shoulder. It is true that he did not stand there long; for scarcely had he finished the letter, or

rather the note, which he had just received in so strange and mysterious a manner, when he replaced it in its silver receptacle, and readjusting his cloak so as to hide all the lower part of his face, resumed his walk with a rapid step, crossed Borgo San Spirito, and took the street of the Longara, which he followed as far as the church of Regina Cœli. When he arrived at this place, he gave three rapid knocks on the door of a house of good appearance, which immediately opened; then slowly mounting the stairs he entered a room where two women were awaiting him with an impatience so unconcealed that both as they saw him exclaimed together—

"Well, Francesco, what news?"

"Good news, my mother; good, my sister," replied the young man, kissing the one and giving his hand to the other. "Our father has gained three votes to-day, but he still needs six to have the majority."

"Then is there no means of buying them?" cried the elder of the two women, while the younger, instead of speaking, asked him with a look.

"Certainly, my mother, certainly," replied the young man; "and it is just about that that my father has been thinking. He is giving Cardinal Orsini his palace at Rome and his two castles of Monticello and Soriano; to Cardinal Colonna his abbey of Subiaco; he gives Cardinal Sant' Angelo the bishopric of Porto, with the furniture and cellar; to the Cardinal of Parma the town of Nepi; to the Cardinal of Genoa the church of Santa Maria-in-Via-Lata; and lastly, to Cardinal Savelli the church of Santa Maria Maggiore and the town of Cività Castellana; as to Cardinal Ascanio Sforza, he knows already that the day before yesterday we sent to his house four mules laden with silver and plate, and out of this treasure he has engaged to give five thousand ducats to the Cardinal Patriarch of Venice."

"But how shall we get the others to know the intentions of Roderigo?" asked the elder of the two women.

"My father has provided for everything, and proposes an

easy method; you know, my mother, with what sort of ceremonial the cardinals' dinner is carried in."

"Yes, on a litter, in a large basket with the arms of the cardinal for whom the meal is prepared."

"My father has bribed the bishop who examines it: to-morrow is a feast-day; to the Cardinals Orsini, Colonna, Savelli, Sant' Angelo, and the Cardinals of Parma and of Genoa, chickens will be sent for hot meat, and each chicken will contain a deed of gift duly drawn up, made by me in my father's name, of the houses, palaces, or churches which are destined for each."

"Capital!" said the elder of the two women; "now, I am certain, all will go well."

"And by the grace of God," added the younger, with a strangely mocking smile, "our father will be pope."

"Oh, it will be a fine day for us!" cried Francesco.

"And for Christendom," replied his sister, with a still more ironical expression.

"Lucrezia, Lucrezia," said the mother, "you do not deserve the happiness which is coming to us."

"What does that matter, if it comes all the same? Besides, you know the proverb, mother: 'Large families are blessed of the Lord'; and still more so our family, which is so patriarchal."

At the same time she cast on her brother a look so wanton that the young man blushed under it: but as at the moment he had to think of other things than his illicit loves, he ordered that four servants should be awakened; and while they were getting armed to accompany him, he drew up and signed the six deeds of gift which were to be carried the next day to the cardinals; for, not wishing to be seen at their houses, he thought he would profit by the night-time to carry them himself to certain persons in his confidence who would have them passed in, as had been arranged, at the dinner-hour. Then, when the deeds were quite ready and the servants also, Francesco went out with them, leaving the two women to dream golden dreams of their future greatness.

From the first dawn of day the people hurried anew, as ardent and interested as on the evening before, to the Piazza of the Vatican, where, at the ordinary time,—that is, at ten o'clock in the morning,—the smoke rose again as usual, evoking laughter and murmuring, as it announced that none of the cardinals had secured the majority. A report, however, began to be spread about that the chances were divided between three candidates, who were Roderigo Borgia, Giuliano della Rovera, and Ascanio Sforza; for the people as yet knew nothing of the four mules laden with plate and silver which had been led to Sforza's house, by reason of which he had given up his own votes to his rival. In the midst of the agitation excited in the crowd by this new report a solemn chanting was heard; it proceeded from a procession, led by the Cardinal Camerlengo, with the object of obtaining from Heaven the speedy election of a pope: this procession, starting from the church of Ara Cœli at the Capitol, was to make stations before the principal Madonnas and the most frequented churches. As soon as the silver crucifix was perceived which went in front, the most profound silence prevailed, and every-one fell on his knees; thus a supreme calm followed the tumult and uproar which had been heard a few minutes before, and which at each appearance of the smoke had assumed a more threatening character: there was a shrewd suspicion that the procession, as well as having a religious end in view, had a political object also, and that its influence was intended to be as great on earth as in heaven. In any case, if such had been the design of the Cardinal Camerlengo, he had not deceived himself, and the effect was what he desired: when the procession had gone past, the laughing and joking continued, but the cries and threats had completely ceased.

The whole day passed thus; for in Rome nobody works. You are either a cardinal or a lacquey, and you live, nobody knows how. The crowd was still extremely numerous, when, towards two o'clock in the afternoon, another procession, which had quite as much power of provoking noise as the first of imposing silence, traversed in its turn the Piazza of St.

Peter's: this was the dinner procession. The people received it with the usual bursts of laughter, without suspecting, for all their irreverence, that this procession, more efficacious than the former, had just settled the election of the new pope.

The hour of the *Ave Maria* came as on the evening before; but, as on the evening before, the waiting of the whole day was lost; for, as half-past eight struck, the daily smoke reappeared at the top of the chimney. But when at the same moment rumours which came from the inside of the Vatican were spread abroad, announcing that, in all probability, the election would take place the next day, the good people preserved their patience. Besides, it had been very hot that day, and they were so broken with fatigue and roasted by the sun, these dwellers in shade and idleness, that they had no strength left to complain.

The morning of the next day, which was the 11th of August 1492, arose stormy and dark; this did not hinder the multitude from thronging the piazzas, streets, doors, houses, churches. Moreover, this disposition of the weather was a real blessing from Heaven; for if there were heat, at least there would be no sun. Towards nine o'clock threatening storm-clouds were heaped up over all the Trastevere; but to this crowd what mattered rain, lightning, or thunder? They were preoccupied with a concern of a very different nature; they were waiting for their pope: a promise had been made them for to-day, and it could be seen by the manner of all, that if the day should pass without any election taking place, the end of it might very well be a riot; therefore, in proportion as the time advanced, the agitation grew greater. Nine o'clock, half-past nine, a quarter to ten struck, without anything happening to confirm or destroy their hopes. At last the first stroke of ten was heard; all eyes turned towards the chimney: ten o'clock struck slowly, each stroke vibrating in the heart of the multitude. At last the tenth stroke trembled, then vanished shuddering into space, and a great cry breaking simultaneously from a hundred thousand breasts followed the silence: "*Non*

v'è fumo! There is no smoke!" In other words, "We have a pope."

At this moment the rain began to fall; but no one paid any attention to it, so great were the transports of joy and impatience among all the people. At last a little stone was detached from the walled window which gave on the balcony and upon which all eyes were fixed: a general shout saluted its fall; little by little the aperture grew larger, and in a few minutes it was large enough to allow a man to come out on the balcony.

The Cardinal Ascanio Sforza appeared; but at the moment when he was on the point of coming out, frightened by the rain and the lightning, he hesitated an instant, and finally drew back: immediately the multitude in their turn broke out like a tempest into cries, curses, howls, threatening to tear down the Vatican and to go and seek their pope themselves. At this noise, Cardinal Sforza, more terrified by the popular storm than by the storm in the heavens, advanced on the balcony, and between two thunderclaps, in a moment of silence astonishing to anyone who had just heard the clamour that went before, made the following proclamation:—

"I announce to you a great joy: the most Eminent and most Reverend Signor Roderigo Lenzuolo Borgia, Archbishop of Valencia, Cardinal-Deacon of San Nicolao-in-Carcere, Vice-Chancellor of the Church, has now been elected Pope, and has assumed the name of Alexander VI."

The news of this nomination was received with strange joy. Roderigo Borgia had the reputation of a dissolute man, it is true, but libertinism had mounted the throne with Sixtus IV and Innocent VIII, so that for the Romans there was nothing new in the singular situation of a pope with a mistress and five children. The great thing for the moment was that the power fell into strong hands; and it was more important for the tranquillity of Rome that the new pope inherited the sword of St. Paul than that he inherited the keys of St. Peter.

And so, in the feasts that were given on this occasion, the dominant character was much more warlike than religious,

and would have appeared rather to suit with the election of some young conqueror than the exaltation of an old pontiff: there was no limit to the pleasantries and prophetic epigrams on the name of Alexander, which for the second time seemed to promise the Romans the empire of the world; and the same evening, in the midst of brilliant illuminations and bonfires, which seemed to turn the town into a lake of flame, the following epigram was read, amid the acclamation of the people:—

"Rome under Cæsar's rule in ancient story
At home and o'er the world victorious trod;
But Alexander still extends his glory:
Cæsar was man, but Alexander God."

As to the new pope, scarcely had he completed the formalities of etiquette which his exaltation imposed upon him, and paid to each man the price of his simony, when from the height of the Vatican he cast his eyes upon Europe, a vast political game of chess, which he cherished the hope of directing at the will of his own genius.

CHAPTER II

THE world had now arrived at one of those supreme moments of history when everything is transformed between the end of one period and the beginning of another: in the East Turkey, in the South Spain, in the West France, and in the North Germany, all were going to assume, together with the title of great Powers, that influence which they were destined to exert in the future over the secondary States. Accordingly we too, with Alexander VI, will cast a rapid glance over them, and see what were their respective situations in regard to Italy, which they all coveted as a prize.

Constantine Palæologos Dragozès, besieged by three hundred thousand Turks, after having appealed in vain for aid to the whole of Christendom, had not been willing to survive the loss of his empire, and had been found in the midst of the dead, close to the Tophana Gate; and on the 30th of May 1453 Mahomet II had made his entry into Constantinople, where, after a reign which had earned for him the surname of *Fatile*, or the Conqueror, he had died, leaving two sons, the elder of whom had ascended the throne under the name of Bajazet II.

The accession of the new sultan, however, had not taken place with the tranquillity which his right as elder brother and his father's choice of him should have promised. His younger brother, D'jem, better known under the name of Zizimeh, had argued that whereas he was born in the purple—that is, born during the reign of Mahomet—Bajazet was born prior to this epoch, and was therefore the son of a private individual. This was rather a poor trick; but where force is all and right is naught, it was good enough to stir up a war. The two

brothers, each at the head of an army, met accordingly in Asia in 1482. D'jem was defeated after a seven hours' fight, and pursued by his brother, who gave him no time to rally his army: he was obliged to embark from Cilicia, and took refuge in Rhodes, where he implored the protection of the Knights of St. John. They, not daring to give him an asylum in their island so near to Asia, sent him to France, where they had him carefully guarded in one of their commanderies, in spite of the urgency of Cait Bey, Sultan of Egypt, who, having revolted against Bajazet, desired to have the young prince in his army to give his rebellion the appearance of legitimate warfare. The same demand, moreover, with the same political object, had been made successively by Mathias Corvinus, King of Hungary, by Ferdinand, King of Aragon and Sicily, and by Ferdinand, King of Naples.

On his side Bajazet, who knew all the importance of such a rival, if he once allied himself with any one of the princes with whom he was at war, had sent ambassadors to Charles VIII, offering, if he would consent to keep D'jem with him, to give him a considerable pension, and to give to France the sovereignty of the Holy Land, so soon as Jerusalem should be conquered by the Sultan of Egypt. The King of France had accepted these terms.

But then Innocent VIII had intervened, and in his turn had claimed D'jem, ostensibly to give support by the claims of the refugee to a crusade which he was preaching against the Turks, but in reality to appropriate the pension of 40,000 ducats to be given by Bajazet to any one of the Christian princes who would undertake to be his brother's gaoler. Charles VIII had not dared to refuse to the spiritual head of Christendom a request supported by such holy reasons; and therefore D'jem had quitted France, accompanied by the Grand Master d'Aubusson, under whose direct charge he was; but his guardian had consented, for the sake of a cardinal's hat, to yield up his prisoner. Thus, on the 13th of March 1489, the unhappy young man, cynosure of so many interested eyes, made his solemn entry into Rome, mounted on a superb

horse, clothed in a magnificent oriental costume, between the Prior of Auvergne, nephew of the Grand Master d'Aubusson, and Francesco Cibo, the son of the pope.

After this, he had remained there, and Bajazet, faithful to promises which it was so much his interest to fulfil, had punctually paid to the sovereign pontiff a pension of 40,000 ducats.

So much for Turkey.

Ferdinand and Isabella were reigning in Spain, and were laying the foundations of that vast power which was destined, five-and-twenty years later, to make Charles v declare that the sun never set on his dominions. In fact, these two sovereigns, on whom history has bestowed the name of Catholic, had reconquered in succession nearly all Spain, and driven the Moors out of Granada, their last entrenchment; while two men of genius, Bartolomé Diaz and Christopher Columbus, had succeeded, much to the profit of Spain, the one in recovering a lost world, the other in conquering a world yet unknown. They had accordingly, thanks to their victories in the ancient world and their discoveries in the new, acquired an influence at the court of Rome which had never been enjoyed by any of their predecessors.

So much for Spain.

In France, Charles VIII had succeeded his father, Louis XI, on the 30th of August 1483. Louis, by dint of executions, had tranquillised his kingdom and smoothed the way for a child who ascended the throne under the regency of a woman. And the regency had been a glorious one, and had put down the pretensions of princes of the blood, put an end to civil wars, and united to the crown all that yet remained of the great independent fiefs. The result was that at the epoch where we now are, here was Charles VIII, about twenty-two years of age, a prince (if we are to believe La Trémouille) little of body but great of heart; a child (if we are to believe Commines) only now making his first flight from the nest, destitute of both sense and money, feeble in person, full of self-will, and consorting rather with fools than with the wise;

lastly, if we are to believe Guicciardini, who as an Italian might well have brought a somewhat partial judgment to bear upon the subject, a young man of little wit concerning the actions of men, but carried away by an ardent desire for rule and the acquisition of glory, a desire based far more on his shallow character and impetuosity than on any consciousness of genius: he was an enemy to all fatigue and all business, and when he tried to give his attention to it he showed himself always totally wanting in prudence and judgment. If anything in him appeared at first sight to be worthy of praise, on a closer inspection it was found to be something nearer akin to vice than to virtue. He was liberal, it is true, but without thought, with no measure and no discrimination. He was sometimes inflexible in will; but this was through obstinacy rather than a constant mind; and what his flatterers called goodness deserved far more the name of insensibility to injuries or poverty of spirit.

As to his physical appearance, if we are to believe the same author, it was still less admirable, and answered marvellously to his weakness of mind and character. He was small, with a large head, a short thick neck, broad chest, and high shoulders; his thighs and legs were long and thin; and as his face also was ugly—and was only redeemed by the dignity and force of his glance—and all his limbs were disproportionate with one another, he had rather the appearance of a monster than a man. Such was he whom Fortune was destined to make a conqueror, for whom Heaven was reserving more glory than he had power to carry.

So much for France.

The Imperial throne was occupied by Frederic III, who had been rightly named the Peaceful, not for the reason that he had always maintained peace, but because, having constantly been beaten, he had always been forced to make it. The first proof he had given of this very philosophical forbearance was during his journey to Rome, whither he betook himself to be consecrated. In crossing the Apennines he was attacked by brigands. They robbed him, but he made no pursuit. And

so, encouraged by example and by the impunity of lesser thieves, the greater ones soon took part in the robberies. Amurath seized part of Hungary. Mathias Corvinus took Lower Austria, and Frederic consoled himself for these usurpations by repeating the maxim, *Forgetfulness is the best cure for the losses we suffer.* At the time we have now reached, he had just, after a reign of fifty-three years, affianced his son Maximilian to Marie of Burgundy, and had put under the ban of the Empire his son-in-law, Albert of Bavaria, who laid claim to the ownership of the Tyrol. He was therefore too full of his family affairs to be troubled about Italy. Besides, he was busy looking for a motto for the house of Austria, an occupation of the highest importance for a man of the character of Frederic III. This motto, which Charles V was destined almost to render true, was at last discovered, to the great joy of the old emperor, who, judging that he had nothing more to do on earth after he had given this last proof of sagacity, died on the 19th of August 1493, leaving the empire to his son Maximilian.

This motto was simply founded on the five vowels, *a*, *e*, *i*, *o*, *u*, the initial letters of these five words—

"AUSTRIÆ EST IMPERARE ORBI UNIVERSO."

This means—

"It is the destiny of Austria to rule over the whole world."

So much for Germany.

Now that we have cast a glance over the four nations which were on the way, as we said before, to become European Powers, let us turn our attention to those secondary States which formed a circle more contiguous to Rome, and whose business it was to serve as armour, so to speak, to the spiritual queen of the world, should it please any of these political giants whom we have described to make encroachments, with a view to an attack, on the seas or the mountains, the Adriatic Gulf or the Alps, the Mediterranean or the Apennines.

These were the kingdom of Naples, the duchy of Milan,

the magnificent republic of Florence, and the most serene republic of Venice.

The kingdom of Naples was in the hands of the old Ferdinand, whose birth was not only illegitimate, but probably also well within the prohibited degrees. His father, Alfonso of Aragon, received his crown from Giovanna of Naples, who had adopted him as her successor. But since, in the fear of having no heir, the queen on her deathbed had named two instead of one, Alfonso had to sustain his rights against Réné. The two aspirants for some time disputed the crown. At last the house of Aragon carried the day over the house of Anjou, and in the course of the year 1442, Alfonso definitely secured his seat on the throne. Of this sort were the claims of the defeated rival which we shall see Charles VIII maintaining later on. Ferdinand had neither the courage nor the genius of his father, and yet he triumphed over his enemies, one after another: he had two rivals, both far superior in merit to himself. The one was his nephew, the Count of Viana, who, basing his claim on his uncle's shameful birth, commanded the whole Aragonese party; the other was Duke John of Calabria, who commanded the whole Angevin party. Still he managed to hold the two apart, and to keep himself on the throne by dint of his prudence, which often verged upon duplicity. He had a cultivated mind, and had studied the sciences—above all, law. He was of middle height, with a large handsome head, his brow open and admirably framed in beautiful white hair, which fell nearly down to his shoulders. Moreover, though he had rarely exercised his physical strength in arms, this strength was so great that one day, when he happened to be on the square of the Mercato Nuovo at Naples, he seized by the horns a bull that had escaped and stopped him short, in spite of all the efforts the animal made to escape from his hands. Now the election of Alexander had caused him great uneasiness, and in spite of his usual prudence he had not been able to restrain himself from saying before the bearer of the news that not only did he fail to rejoice in this election, but also that he did not think that any Christian could rejoice in

it, seeing that Borgia, having always been a bad man, would certainly make a bad pope. To this he added that, even were the choice an excellent one and such as would please everybody else, it would be none the less fatal to the house of Aragon, although Roderigo was born her subject and owed to her the origin and progress of his fortunes; for wherever reasons of state come in, the ties of blood and parentage are soon forgotten, and, *a fortiori*, relations arising from the obligations of nationality.

Thus one may see that Ferdinand judged Alexander VI with his usual perspicacity; this, however, did not hinder him, as we shall soon perceive, from being the first to contract an alliance with him.

The duchy of Milan belonged nominally to John Galeazzo, grandson of Francesco Sforza, who had seized it by violence on the 26th of February 1450, and bequeathed it to his son, Galeazzo Maria, father of the young prince now reigning; we say nominally, because the real master of the Milanese was at this period not the legitimate heir who was supposed to possess it, but his uncle Ludovico, surnamed *il Moro*, because of the mulberry tree which he bore in his arms. After being exiled with his two brothers, Philip who died of poison in 1479, and Ascanio who became the cardinal, he returned to Milan some days after the assassination of Galeazzo Maria, which took place on the 26th of December 1476 in St. Stephen's Church, and assumed the regency for the young duke, who at that time was only eight years old. From now onward, even after his nephew had reached the age of two-and-twenty, Ludovico continued to rule, and according to all probabilities was destined to rule a long time yet; for, some days after the poor young man had shown a desire to take the reins himself, he had fallen sick, and it was said, and not in a whisper, that he had taken one of those slow but mortal poisons of which princes made so frequent a use at this period, that, even when a malady was natural, a cause was always sought connected with some great man's interests. However it may have been, Ludovico had relegated his nephew, now too weak to busy himself hencefor-

ward with the affairs of his duchy, to the castle of Pavia, where he lay and languished under the eyes of his wife Isabella, daughter of King Ferdinand of Naples.

As to Ludovico, he was an ambitious man, full of courage and astuteness, familiar with the sword and with poison, which he used alternately, according to the occasion, without feeling any repugnance or any predilection for either of them; but quite decided to be his nephew's heir whether he died or lived.

Florence, although she had preserved the name of a republic, had little by little lost all her liberties, and belonged in fact, if not by right, to Piero dei Medici, to whom she had been bequeathed as a paternal legacy by Lorenzo, as we have seen, at the risk of his soul's salvation.

The son, unfortunately, was far from having the genius of his father: he was handsome, it is true, whereas Lorenzo, on the contrary, was remarkably ugly; he had an agreeable, musical voice, whereas Lorenzo had always spoken through his nose; he was instructed in Latin and Greek, his conversation was pleasant and easy, and he improvised verses almost as well as the so-called Magnificent; but he was both ignorant of political affairs and haughtily insolent in his behaviour to those who had made them their study. Added to this, he was an ardent lover of pleasure, passionately addicted to women, incessantly occupied with bodily exercises that should make him shine in their eyes, above all with tennis, a game at which he very highly excelled: he promised himself that, when the period of mourning was past, he would occupy the attention not only of Florence but of the whole of Italy, by the splendour of his courts and the renown of his fêtes. Piero dei Medici had at any rate formed this plan; but Heaven decreed otherwise.

As to the most serene republic of Venice, whose doge was Agostino Barbarigo, she had attained, at the time we have reached, to her highest degree of power and splendour. From Cadiz to the Palus Mæotis, there was no port that was not open to her thousand ships; she possessed in Italy, beyond the coastline of the canals and the ancient duchy of Venice, the provinces of Bergamo, Brescia, Crema, Verona, Vicenza, and

Padua; she owned the marches of Treviso, which comprehend the districts of Feltre, Belluno, Cadore, Polesella of Rovigo, and the principality of Ravenna; she also owned the Friuli, except Aquileia; Istria, except Trieste; she owned, on the east side of the Gulf, Zara, Spalatro, and the shore of Albania; in the Ionian Sea, the islands of Zante and Corfu; in Greece, Lepanto and Patras; in the Morea, Morone, Corone, Neapolis, and Argos; lastly, in the Archipelago, besides several little towns and stations on the coast, she owned Candia and the kingdom of Cyprus.

Thus from the mouth of the Po to the eastern extremity of the Mediterranean, the most serene republic was mistress of the whole coastline, and Italy and Greece seemed to be mere suburbs of Venice.

In the intervals of space left free between Naples, Milan, Florence, and Venice, petty tyrants had arisen who exercised an absolute sovereignty over their territories: thus the Colonnas were at Ostia and at Nettuna, the Montefeltri at Urbino, the Manfredi at Faenza, the Bentivogli at Bologna, the Malatesta family at Rimini, the Vitelli at Città di Castello, the Baglioni at Perugia, the Orsini at Vicovaro, and the princes of Este at Ferrara.

Finally, in the centre of this immense circle, composed of great Powers, of secondary States, and of little tyrannies, Rome was set on high, the most exalted, yet the weakest of all, without influence, without lands, without an army, without gold. It was the concern of the new pope to secure all this: let us see, therefore, what manner of man was this Alexander VI, for undertaking and accomplishing such a project.

CHAPTER III

RODERIGO LENZUOLO was born at Valencia, in Spain, in 1430 or 1431, and on his mother's side was descended, as some writers declare, of a family of royal blood, which had cast its eyes on the tiara only after cherishing hopes of the crowns of Aragon and Valencia. Roderigo from his infancy had shown signs of a marvellous quickness of mind, and as he grew older he exhibited an intelligence extremely apt for the study of sciences, especially law and jurisprudence: the result was that his first distinctions were gained in the law, a profession wherein he soon made a great reputation by his ability in the discussion of the most thorny cases. All the same, he was not slow to leave this career, and abandoned it quite suddenly for the military profession, which his father had followed; but after various actions which served to display his presence of mind and courage, he was as much disgusted with this profession as with the other; and since it happened that at the very time he began to feel this disgust his father died, leaving a considerable fortune, he resolved to do no more work, but to live according to his own fancies and caprices. About this time he became the lover of a widow who had two daughters. The widow dying, Roderigo took the girls under his protection, put one into a convent, and as the other was one of the loveliest women imaginable, made her his mistress. This was the notorious Rosa Vanozza, by whom he had five children—Francesco, Cæsar, Lucrezia, and Goffredo; the name of the fifth is unknown.

Roderigo, retired from public affairs, was given up entirely to the affections of a lover and a father, when he heard that his uncle, who loved him like a son, had been elected pope under the name of Calixtus III. But the young man was at

this time so much a lover that love imposed silence on ambition, and indeed he was almost terrified at the exaltation of his uncle, which was no doubt destined to force him once more into public life. Consequently, instead of hurrying to Rome, as anyone else in his place would have done, he was content to indite to His Holiness a letter in which he begged for the continuation of his favours, and wished him a long and happy reign.

This reserve on the part of one of his relatives, contrasted with the ambitious schemes which beset the new pope at every step, struck Calixtus III in a singular way: he knew the stuff that was in young Roderigo, and at a time when he was besieged on all sides by mediocrities, this powerful nature holding modestly aside gained new grandeur in his eyes: so he replied instantly to Roderigo that on the receipt of his letter he must quit Spain for Italy, Valencia for Rome.

This letter uprooted Roderigo from the centre of happiness he had created for himself, and where he might perhaps have slumbered on like an ordinary man, if fortune had not thus interposed to drag him forcibly away. Roderigo was happy, Roderigo was rich; the evil passions which were natural to him had been, if not extinguished, at least lulled; he was frightened himself at the idea of changing the quiet life he was leading for the ambitious, agitated career that was promised him; and instead of obeying his uncle, he delayed the preparations for departure, hoping that Calixtus would forget him. It was not so: two months after he received the letter from the pope, there arrived at Valencia a prelate from Rome, the bearer of Roderigo's nomination to a benefice worth 20,000 ducats a year, and also a positive order to the holder of the post to come and take possession of his charge as soon as possible.

Holding back was no longer feasible: so Roderigo obeyed; but as he did not wish to be separated from the source whence had sprung eight years of happiness, Rosa Vanozza also left Spain, and while he was going to Rome, she betook herself to Venice, accompanied by two confidential servants, and under the protection of a Spanish gentleman named Manuel Melchior.

Fortune kept the promises she had made to Roderigo: the pope received him as a son, and made him successively Archbishop of Valencia, Cardinal-Deacon, and Vice-Chancellor. To all these favours Calixtus added a revenue of 40,000 ducats, so that at the age of scarcely thirty-five Roderigo found himself the equal of a prince in riches and power.

Roderigo had had some reluctance about accepting the cardinalship, which kept him fast at Rome, and would have preferred to be General of the Church, a position which would have allowed him more liberty for seeing his mistress and his family; but his uncle Calixtus made him reckon with the possibility of being his successor some day, and from that moment the idea of being the supreme head of kings and nations took such hold of Roderigo, that he no longer had any end in view but that which his uncle had made him entertain.

From that day forward, there began to grow up in the young cardinal that talent for hypocrisy which made of him the most perfect incarnation of the devil that has perhaps ever existed; and Roderigo was no longer the same man: with words of repentance and humility on his lips, his head bowed as though he were bearing the weight of his past sins, disparaging the riches which he had acquired, and which, according to him, were the wealth of the poor and ought to return to the poor, he passed his life in churches, monasteries, and hospitals, acquiring, his historian tells us, even in the eyes of his enemies, the reputation of a Solomon for wisdom, of a Job for patience, and of a very Moses for his promulgation of the word of God: Rosa Vanozza was the only person in the world who could appreciate the value of this pious cardinal's conversion.

It proved a lucky thing for Roderigo that he had assumed this pious attitude, for his protector died after a reign of three years three months and nineteen days, and he was now sustained by his own merit alone against the numerous enemies he had made by his rapid rise to fortune: so during the whole of the reign of Pius II he lived always apart from public affairs,

and only reappeared in the days of Sixtus IV, who made him the gift of the abbacy of Subiaco, and sent him in the capacity of ambassador to the kings of Aragon and Portugal. On his return, which took place during the pontificate of Innocent VIII, he decided to fetch his family at last to Rome: thither they came, escorted by Don Manuel Melchior, who from that moment passed as the husband of Rosa Vanozza, and took the name of Count Ferdinand of Castile. The Cardinal Roderigo received the noble Spaniard as a countryman and a friend; and he, who expected to lead a most retired life, engaged a house in the street of the Lungara, near the church of Regina Cœli, on the banks of the Tiber. There it was that, after passing the day in prayers and pious works, Cardinal Roderigo used to repair each evening and lay aside his mask. And it was said though nobody could prove it, that in this house infamous scenes passed: there was talk of illicit relations between father and daughter, and between the two brothers and their sister; so that, with a view to checking the rumours that began to spread abroad, Roderigo sent Cesare to study at Pisa, and married Lucrezia to a young gentleman of Aragon; thus there only remained at home Rosa Vanozza and her two sons: such was the state of things when Innocent VIII died and Roderigo Borgia was proclaimed pope.

We have seen by what means the nomination was effected; and so the five cardinals who had taken no part in this simony—namely, the Cardinals of Naples, Siena, Portugal, Santa Maria-in-Porticu, and St. Peter-in-Vinculis—protested loudly against this election, which they treated as a piece of jobbery; but Roderigo had none the less, however it was done, secured his majority; Roderigo was none the less the two hundred and sixtieth successor of St. Peter.

Alexander VI, however, though he had arrived at his object, did not dare throw off at first the mask which the Cardinal Borgia had worn so long, although when he was apprised of his election he could not dissimulate his joy; indeed, on hearing the favourable result of the scrutiny, he lifted his hands to heaven and cried, in the accents of satisfied

ambition, "Am I then pope? Am I then Christ's vicar? Am I then the keystone of the Christian world?"

"Yes, holy father," replied Cardinal Ascanio Sforza, the same who had sold to Roderigo the nine votes that were at his disposal at the Conclave for four mules laden with silver; "and we hope by your election to give glory to God, repose to the Church, and joy to Christendom, seeing that you have been chosen by the Almighty Himself as the most worthy among all your brethren."

But in the short interval occupied by this reply, the new pope had already assumed the papal authority, and in a humble voice and with hands crossed upon his breast, he spoke:

"We hope that God will grant us His powerful aid, in spite of our weakness, and that He will do for us that which He did for the apostle when aforetime He put into his hands the keys of heaven and entrusted to him the government of the Church, a government which without the aid of God would prove too heavy a burden for mortal man; but God promised that His Spirit should direct him; God will do the same, I trust, for us; and for your part, we fear not lest any of you fail in that holy obedience which is due unto the head of the Church, even as the flock of Christ was bidden to follow the prince of the apostles."

Having spoken these words, Alexander donned the pontifical robes, and through the windows of the Vatican had strips of paper thrown out on which his name was written in Latin. These, blown by the wind, seemed to convey to the whole world the news of the great event which was about to change the face of Italy. The same day couriers started for all the courts of Europe.

Cæsar Borgia learned the news of his father's election at the University of Pisa, where he was a student. His ambition had sometimes dreamed of such good fortune, yet his joy was little short of madness. He was then a young man, about twenty-two or twenty-four years of age, skilful in all bodily exercises, and especially in fencing; he could ride barebacked the most fiery steeds, could cut off the head of a bull at a single sword-stroke; moreover, he was arrogant, jealous, and

insincere. According to Tommasi, he was great among the godless, as his brother Francesco was good among the great. As to his face, even contemporary authors have left utterly different descriptions; for some have painted him as a monster of ugliness, while others, on the contrary, extol his beauty. This contradiction is due to the fact that at certain times of the year, and especially in the spring, his face was covered with an eruption which, so long as it lasted, made him an object of horror and disgust, while all the rest of the year he was the sombre, black-haired cavalier with pale skin and tawny beard whom Raphael shows us in the fine portrait he made of him. And historians, both chroniclers and painters, agree as to his fixed and powerful gaze, behind which burned a ceaseless flame, giving to his face something infernal and superhuman. Such was the man whose fortune was to fulfil all his desires. He had taken for his motto, *Aut Cæsar, aut nihil:* Cæsar or nothing.

Cæsar posted to Rome with certain of his friends, and scarcely was he recognised at the gates of the city when the deference shown to him gave instant proof of the change in his fortunes: at the Vatican the respect was twice as great; mighty men bowed down before him as before one mightier than themselves. And so, in his impatience, he stayed not to visit his mother or any other member of his family, but went straight to the pope to kiss his feet; and as the pope had been forewarned of his coming, he awaited him in the midst of a brilliant and numerous assemblage of cardinals, with the three other brothers standing behind him. His Holiness received Cæsar with a gracious countenance; still, he did not allow himself any demonstration of his paternal love, but, bending towards him, kissed him on the forehead, and inquired how he was and how he had fared on his journey. Cæsar replied that he was wonderfully well, and altogether at the service of His Holiness; that, as to the journey, the trifling inconveniences and short fatigue had been compensated, and far more than compensated, by the joy which he felt in being able to adore upon the papal throne a pope who was so worthy.

At these words, leaving Cæsar still on his knees, and re-seating himself—for he had risen from his seat to embrace him—the pope assumed a grave and composed expression of face, and spoke as follows, loud enough to be heard by all, and slowly enough for everyone present to be able to ponder and retain in his memory even the least of his words:—

"We are convinced, Cæsar, that you are peculiarly rejoiced in beholding us on this sublime height, so far above our deserts, whereto it has pleased the Divine goodness to exalt us. This joy of yours is first of all our due because of the love we have always borne you and which we bear you still, and in the second place is prompted by your own personal interest, since henceforth you may feel sure of receiving from our pontifical hand those benefits which your own good works shall deserve. But if your joy—and this we say to you as we have even now said to your brothers—if your joy is founded on aught else than this, you are very greatly mistaken, Cæsar, and you will find yourself sadly deceived. Perhaps we have been ambitious—we confess this humbly before the face of all men—passionately and immoderately ambitious to attain to the dignity of sovereign pontiff, and to reach this end we have followed every path that is open to human industry; but we have acted thus, vowing an inward vow that when once we had reached our goal, we would follow no other path but that which conduces best to the service of God and to the advancement of the Holy See, so that the glorious memory of the deeds that we shall do may efface the shameful recollection of the deeds we have already done. Thus shall we, let us hope, leave to those who follow us a track whereupon if they find not the footsteps of a saint, they may at least tread in the path of a true pontiff. God, who has furthered the means, claims at our hands the fruits, and we desire to discharge to the full this mighty debt that we have incurred to Him; and accordingly we refuse to arouse by any deceit the stern rigour of His judgments. One sole hindrance could have power to shake our good intentions, and that might happen should we feel too keen an interest in your fortunes. Therefore are we

armed beforehand against our love, and therefore have we prayed to God beforehand that we stumble not because of you; for in the path of favouritism a pope cannot slip without a fall, and cannot fall without injury and dishonour to the Holy See. Even to the end of our life we shall deplore the faults which have brought this experience home to us; and may it please God that our uncle Calixtus of blessed memory bear not this day in purgatory the burden of our sins, more heavy, alas, than his own! Ah, he was rich in every virtue, he was full of good intentions; but he loved too much his own people, and among them he loved me chief. And so he suffered this love to lead him blindly astray, all this love that he bore to his kindred, who to him were too truly flesh of his flesh, so that he heaped upon the heads of a few persons only, and those perhaps the least worthy, benefits which would more fittingly have rewarded the deserts of many. In truth, he bestowed upon our house treasures that should never have been amassed at the expense of the poor, or else should have been turned to a better purpose. He severed from the ecclesiastical State, already weak and poor, the duchy of Spoleto and other wealthy properties, that he might make them fiefs to us; he confided to our weak hands the vice-chancellorship, the vice-prefecture of Rome, the generalship of the Church, and all the other most important offices, which, instead of being monopolised by us, should have been conferred on those who were most meritorious. Moreover, there were persons who were raised on our recommendation to posts of great dignity, although they had no claims but such as our undue partiality accorded them; others were left out with no reason for their failure except the jealousy excited in us by their virtues. To rob Ferdinand of Aragon of the kingdom of Naples, Calixtus kindled a terrible war, which by a happy issue only served to increase our fortune, and by an unfortunate issue must have brought shame and disaster upon the Holy See. Lastly, by allowing himself to be governed by men who sacrificed public good to their private interests, he inflicted an injury, not only upon the pontifical throne and his

own reputation, but what is far worse, far more deadly, upon his own conscience. And yet, O wise judgments of God! hard and incessantly though he toiled to establish our fortunes, scarcely had he left empty that supreme seat which we occupy to-day, when we were cast down from the pinnacle whereon we had climbed, abandoned to the fury of the rabble and the vindictive hatred of the Roman barons, who chose to feel offended by our goodness to their enemies. Thus, not only, we tell you, Cæsar, not only did we plunge headlong from the summit of our grandeur, losing the worldly goods and dignities which our uncle had heaped at our feet, but for very peril of our life we were condemned to a voluntary exile, we and our friends, and in this way only did we contrive to escape the storm which our too good fortune had stirred up against us. Now this is a plain proof that God mocks at men's designs when they are bad ones. How great an error is it for any pope to devote more care to the welfare of a house, which cannot last more than a few years, than to the glory of the Church, which will last for ever! What utter folly for any public man whose position is not inherited and cannot be bequeathed to his posterity, to support the edifice of his grandeur on any other basis than the noblest virtue practised for the general good, and to suppose that he can ensure the continuance of his own fortune otherwise than by taking all precautions against sudden whirlwinds which are wont to arise in the midst of a calm, and to blow up the storm-clouds—I mean the host of enemies. Now any one of these enemies who does his worst can cause injuries far more powerful than any help that is at all likely to come from a hundred friends and their lying promises. If you and your brothers walk in the path of virtue which we shall now open for you, every wish of your heart shall be instantly accomplished; but if you take the other path, if you have ever hoped that our affection will wink at disorderly life, then you will very soon find out that we are truly pope, Father of the Church, not father of the family; that, vicar of Christ as we are, we shall act as we deem best for Christendom, and not

as you deem best for your own private good. And now that we have come to a thorough understanding, Cæsar, receive our pontifical blessing." And with these words Alexander VI rose up, laid his hands upon his son's head, for Cæsar was still kneeling, and then retired into his apartments, without inviting him to follow.

The young man remained awhile stupefied at this discourse, so utterly unexpected, so utterly destructive at one fell blow to his most cherished hopes. He rose giddy and staggering like a drunken man, and at once leaving the Vatican, hurried to his mother, whom he had forgotten before, but sought now in his despair. Rosa Vanozza possessed all the vices and all the virtues of a Spanish courtesan; her devotion to the Virgin amounted to superstition, her fondness for her children to weakness, and her love for Roderigo to sensuality. In the depth of her heart she relied on the influence she had been able to exercise over him for nearly thirty years; and like a snake, she knew how to envelop him in her coils when the fascination of her glance had lost its power. Rosa knew of old the profound hypocrisy of her lover, and thus she was in no difficulty about reassuring Cæsar.

Lucrezia was with her mother when Cæsar arrived; the two young people exchanged a lover-like kiss beneath her very eyes: and before he left Cæsar had made an appointment for the same evening with Lucrezia, who was now living—apart from her husband, to whom Roderigo paid a pension—in her palace of the Via del Pelegrino, opposite the Campo dei Fiori, and there enjoying perfect liberty.

In the evening, at the hour fixed, Cæsar appeared at Lucrezia's; but he found there his brother Francesco. The two young men had never been friends. Still, as their tastes were very different, hatred with Francesco was only the fear of the deer for the hunter; but with Cæsar it was the desire for vengeance and that lust for blood which lurks perpetually in the heart of a tiger. The two brothers none the less embraced, one from general kindly feeling, the other from hypocrisy; but at first sight of one another the sentiment of a

double rivalry, first in their father's and then in their sister's good graces, had sent the blood mantling to the cheek of Francesco, and called a deadly pallor into Cæsar's. So the two young men sat on, each resolved not to be the first to leave, when all at once there was a knock at the door, and a rival was announced before whom both of them were bound to give way: it was their father.

Rosa Vanozza was quite right in comforting Cæsar. Indeed, although Alexander VI had repudiated the abuses of nepotism, he understood very well the part that was to be played for his benefit by his sons and his daughter; for he knew he could always count on Lucrezia and Cæsar, if not on Francesco and Goffredo. In these matters the sister was quite worthy of her brother. Lucrezia was wanton in imagination, godless by nature, ambitious and designing: she had a craving for pleasure, admiration, honours, money, jewels, gorgeous stuffs, and magnificent mansions. A true Spaniard beneath her golden tresses, a courtesan beneath her frank looks, she carried the head of a Raphael Madonna, and concealed the heart of a Messalina. She was dear to Roderigo both as daughter and as mistress, and he saw himself reflected in her as in a magic mirror, every passion and every vice. Lucrezia and Cæsar were accordingly the best beloved of his heart, and the three composed that diabolical trio which for eleven years occupied the pontifical throne, like a mocking parody of the heavenly Trinity.

Nothing occurred at first to give the lie to Alexander's professions of principle in the discourse he addressed to Cæsar, and the first year of his pontificate exceeded all the hopes of Rome at the time of his election. He arranged for the provision of stores in the public granaries with such liberality, that within the memory of man there had never been such astonishing abundance; and with a view to extending the general prosperity to the lowest class, he organised numerous doles to be paid out of his private fortune, which made it possible for the very poor to participate in the general banquet from which they had been excluded for long enough. The safety of the city was secured, from the very

first days of his accession, by the establishment of a strong and vigilant police force, and a tribunal consisting of four magistrates of irreproachable character, empowered to prosecute all nocturnal crimes, which during the last pontificate had been so common that their very numbers made impunity certain: these judges from the first showed a severity which neither the rank nor the purse of the culprit could modify. This presented such a great contrast to the corruption of the last reign,—in the course of which the vice-chamberlain one day remarked in public, when certain people were complaining of the venality of justice, "God wills not that a sinner die, but that he live and pay,"—that the capital of the Christian world felt for one brief moment restored to the happy days of the papacy. So, at the end of a year, Alexander VI had reconquered that spiritual credit, so to speak, which his predecessors lost. His political credit was still to be established, if he was to carry out the first part of his gigantic scheme. To arrive at this, he must employ two agencies—alliances and conquests. His plan was to begin with alliances. The gentleman of Aragon who had married Lucrezia when she was only the daughter of Cardinal Roderigo Borgia was not a man powerful enough, either by birth and fortune or by intellect, to enter with any sort of effect into the plots and plans of Alexander VI; the separation was therefore changed into a divorce, and Lucrezia Borgia was now free to remarry. Alexander opened up two negotiations at the same time: he needed an ally to keep a watch on the policy of the neighbouring States. John Sforza, grandson of Alexander Sforza, brother of the great Francis I, Duke of Milan, was lord of Pesaro; the geographical situation of this place, on the coast, on the way between Florence and Venice, was wonderfully convenient for his purpose; so Alexander first cast an eye upon him, and as the interest of both parties was evidently the same, it came about that John Sforza was very soon Lucrezia's second husband.

At the same time overtures had been made to Alfonso of Aragon, heir presumptive to the crown of Naples, to arrange a

marriage between Doña Sancia, his illegitimate daughter, and Goffredo, the pope's third son; but as the old Ferdinand wanted to make the best bargain he could out of it, he dragged on the negotiations as long as possible, urging that the two children were not of marriageable age, and so, highly honoured as he felt in such a prospective alliance, there was no hurry about the engagement. Matters stopped at this point, to the great annoyance of Alexander VI, who saw through this excuse, and understood that the postponement was nothing more nor less than a refusal. Accordingly Alexander and Ferdinand remained *in statu quo*, equals in the political game, both on the watch till events should declare for one or other. The turn of fortune was for Alexander.

Italy, though tranquil, was instinctively conscious that her calm was nothing but the lull which goes before a storm. She was too rich and too happy to escape the envy of other nations. As yet the plains of Pisa had not been reduced to marsh-lands by the combined negligence and jealousy of the Florentine Republic, neither had the rich country that lay around Rome been converted into a barren desert by the wars of the Colonna and Orsini families; not yet had the Marquis of Marignan razed to the ground a hundred and twenty villages in the republic of Siena alone; and though the Maremma was unhealthy, it was not yet a poisonous marsh: it is a fact that Flavio Blondo, writing in 1450, describes Ostia as being merely less flourishing than in the days of the Romans, when she had numbered 50,000 inhabitants, whereas now in our own day there are barely 30 in all.

The Italian peasants were perhaps the most blest on the face of the earth: instead of living scattered about the country in solitary fashion, they lived in villages that were enclosed by walls as a protection for their harvests, animals, and farm implements; their houses—at any rate those that yet stand—prove that they lived in much more comfortable and beautiful surroundings than the ordinary townsman of our day. Further, there was a community of interests, and many people collected together in the fortified villages, with the result that little by

little they attained to an importance never acquired by the boorish French peasants or the German serfs; they bore arms, they had a common treasury, they elected their own magistrates, and whenever they went out to fight, it was to save their common country.

Also commerce was no less flourishing than agriculture; Italy at this period was rich in industries—silk, wool, hemp, fur, alum, sulphur, bitumen; those products which the Italian soil could not bring forth were imported, from the Black Sea, from Egypt, from Spain, from France, and often returned whence they came, their worth doubled by labour and fine workmanship. The rich man brought his merchandise, the poor his industry: the one was sure of finding workmen, the other was sure of finding work.

Art also was by no means behindhand: Dante, Giotto, Brunelleschi, and Donatello were dead, but Ariosto, Raphael, Bramante, and Michael Angelo were now living. Rome, Florence, and Naples had inherited the masterpieces of antiquity; and the manuscripts of Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides had come (thanks to the conquest of Mahomet II) to rejoin the statue of Xanthippus and the works of Phidias and Praxiteles. The principal sovereigns of Italy had come to understand, when they let their eyes dwell upon the fat harvests, the wealthy villages, the flourishing manufactories, and the marvellous churches, and then compared with them the poor and rude nations of fighting men who surrounded them on all sides, that some day or other they were destined to become for other countries what America was for Spain, a vast gold-mine for them to work. In consequence of this, a league offensive and defensive had been signed, about 1480, by Naples, Milan, Florence, and Ferrara, prepared to take a stand against enemies within or without, in Italy or outside. Ludovico Sforza, who was more than anyone else interested in maintaining this league, because he was nearest to France, whence the storm seemed to threaten, saw in the new pope's election means not only of strengthening the league, but of making its power and unity conspicuous in the sight of Europe.

CHAPTER IV

ON the occasion of each new election to the papacy, it is the custom for all the Christian States to send a solemn embassy to Rome, to renew their oath of allegiance to the Holy Father. Ludovico Sforza conceived the idea that the ambassadors of the four Powers should unite and make their entry into Rome on the same day, appointing one of their envoys, viz. the representative of the King of Naples, to be spokesman for all four. Unluckily, this plan did not agree with the magnificent projects of Piero dei Medici. That proud youth, who had been appointed ambassador of the Florentine Republic, had seen in the mission entrusted to him by his fellow-citizens the means of making a brilliant display of his own wealth. From the day of his nomination onwards, his palace was constantly filled with tailors, jewellers, and merchants of priceless stuffs; magnificent clothes had been made for him, embroidered with precious stones which he had selected from the family treasures. All his jewels, perhaps the richest in Italy, were distributed about the liveries of his pages, and one of them, his favourite, was to wear a collar of pearls valued by itself at 100,000 ducats, or almost a million of our francs. In his party the Bishop of Arezzo, Gentile, who had once been Lorenzo dei Medici's tutor, was elected as second ambassador, and it was his duty to speak. Now Gentile, who had prepared his speech, counted on his eloquence to charm the ear quite as much as Piero counted on his riches to dazzle the eye. But the eloquence of Gentile would be lost completely if nobody was to speak but the ambassador of the King of Naples; and the magnificence of Piero dei Medici would never be noticed at all if he went to

Rome mixed up with all the other ambassadors. These two important interests, compromised by the Duke of Milan's proposition, changed the whole face of Italy.

Ludovico Sforza had already made sure of Ferdinand's promise to conform to the plan he had invented, when the old king, at the solicitation of Piero, suddenly drew back. Sforza found out how this change had come about, and learned that it was Piero's influence that had overmastered his own. He could not disentangle the real motives that had prompted the change, and imagined there was some secret league against himself: he attributed the changed political programme to the death of Lorenzo dei Medici. But whatever its cause might be, it was evidently prejudicial to his own interests: Florence, Milan's old ally, was abandoning her for Naples. He resolved to throw a counter weight into the scales; so, betraying to Alexander the policy of Piero and Ferdinand, he proposed to form a defensive and offensive alliance with him and admit the republic of Venice: Duke Hercules III of Ferrara was also to be summoned to pronounce for one or other of the two leagues. Alexander VI, wounded by Ferdinand's treatment of himself, accepted Ludovico Sforza's proposition, and an Act of Confederation was signed on the 22nd of April 1493, by which the new allies pledged themselves to set on foot for the maintenance of the public peace an army of 20,000 horse and 6000 infantry.

Ferdinand was frightened when he beheld the formation of this league; but he thought he could neutralise its effects by depriving Ludovico Sforza of his regency, which he had already kept beyond the proper time, though as yet he was not strictly an usurper. Although the young Galeazzo, his nephew, had reached the age of two-and-twenty, Ludovico Sforza none the less continued regent. Now Ferdinand definitely proposed to the Duke of Milan that he should resign the sovereign power into the hands of his nephew, on pain of being declared an usurper.

This was a bold stroke; but there was a risk of inciting Ludovico Sforza to start one of those political plots that he

was so familiar with, never recoiling from any situation, however dangerous it might be. This was exactly what happened: Sforza, uneasy about his duchy, resolved to threaten Ferdinand's kingdom.

Nothing could be easier: he knew the warlike notions of Charles VIII, and the pretensions of the house of France to the kingdom of Naples. He sent two ambassadors to invite the young king to claim the rights of Anjou usurped by Aragon; and with a view to reconciling Charles to so distant and hazardous an expedition, offered him a free and friendly passage through his own States.

Such a proposition was welcome to Charles VIII, as we might suppose from our knowledge of his character; a magnificent prospect was opened to him as by an enchanter: what Ludovico Sforza was offering him was virtually the command of the Mediterranean, the protectorship of the whole of Italy; it was an open road, through Naples and Venice, that well might lead to the conquest of Turkey or the Holy Land, if he ever had the fancy to avenge the disasters of Nicopolis and Mansourah. So the proposition was accepted, and a secret alliance was signed, with Count Charles di Belgiojoso and the Count of Cajazzo acting for Ludovico Sforza, and the Bishop of St. Malo and Seneschal de Beaucaire for Charles VIII. By this treaty it was agreed—

That the King of France should attempt the conquest of the kingdom of Naples;

That the Duke of Milan should grant a passage to the King of France through his territories, and accompany him with five hundred lances;

That the Duke of Milan should permit the King of France to send out as many ships of war as he pleased from Genoa;

Lastly, that the Duke of Milan should lend the King of France 200,000 ducats, payable when he started.

On his side, Charles VIII agreed—

To defend the personal authority of Ludovico Sforza over the duchy of Milan against anyone who might attempt to turn him out;

To keep two hundred French lances always in readiness to help the house of Sforza, at Asti, a town belonging to the Duke of Orleans by the inheritance of his mother, Valentina Visconti;

Lastly, to hand over to his ally the principality of Tarentum immediately after the conquest of Naples was effected.

This treaty was scarcely concluded when Charles VIII, who exaggerated its advantages, began to dream of freeing himself from every let or hindrance to the expedition. Precautions were necessary; for his relations with the great Powers were far from being what he could have wished.

Indeed, Henry VII had disembarked at Calais with a formidable army, and was threatening France with another invasion.

Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain, if they had not assisted at the fall of the house of Anjou, had at any rate helped the Aragon party with men and money.

Lastly, the war with the emperor acquired a fresh impetus when Charles VIII sent back Margaret of Burgundy to her father Maximilian, and contracted a marriage with Anne of Brittany.

By the treaty of Etaples, on the 3rd of November 1492, Henry VII cancelled the alliance with the King of the Romans, and pledged himself not to follow his conquests.

This cost Charles VIII 745,000 gold crowns and the expenses of the war with England.

By the treaty of Barcelona, dated the 19th of January 1493, Ferdinand the Catholic and Isabella agreed never to grant aid to their cousin, Ferdinand of Naples, and never to put obstacles in the way of the French king in Italy.

This cost Charles VIII Perpignan, Roussillon, and the Cerdagne, which had all been given to Louis XI as a hostage for the sum of 300,000 ducats by John of Aragon; but at the time agreed upon, Louis XI would not give them up for the money, for the old fox knew very well how important were these doors to the Pyrenees, and proposed in case of war to keep them shut.

Lastly, by the treaty of Senlis, dated the 23rd of May 1493,

Maximilian granted a gracious pardon to France for the insult her king had offered him.

It cost Charles VIII the counties of Burgundy, Artois, Charolais, and the seigniory of Noyers, which had come to him as Margaret's dowry, and also the towns of Aire, Hesdin, and Bethune, which he promised to deliver up to Philip of Austria on the day he came of age.

By dint of all these sacrifices the young king made peace with his neighbours, and could set on foot the enterprise that Ludovico Sforza had proposed. We have already explained that the project came into Sforza's mind when his plan about the deputation was refused, and that the refusal was due to Piero dei Medici's desire to make an exhibition of his magnificent jewels, and Gentile's desire to make his speech.

Thus the vanity of a tutor and the pride of his scholar together combined to agitate the civilised world from the Gulf of Tarentum to the Pyrenees.

Alexander VI was in the very centre of the impending earthquake, and before Italy had any idea that the earliest shocks were at hand he had profited by the perturbed preoccupation of other people to give the lie to that famous speech we have reported. He created cardinal John Borgia, a nephew, who during the last pontificate had been elected Archbishop of Montréal and Governor of Rome. This promotion caused no discontent, because of John's antecedents; and Alexander, encouraged by the success of this, promised to Cæsar Borgia the archbishopric of Valencia, a benefice he had himself enjoyed before his elevation to the papacy. But here the difficulty arose on the side of the recipient. The young man, full-blooded, with all the vices and natural instincts of a captain of condottieri, had very great trouble in assuming even the appearance of a Churchman's virtue; but as he knew from his own father's mouth that the highest secular dignities were reserved for his elder brother, he decided to take what he could get, for fear of getting nothing; but his hatred for Francesco grew stronger, for from henceforth he was doubly his rival, both in love and ambition.

Suddenly Alexander beheld the old king Ferdinand returning to his side, and at the very moment when he least expected it. The pope was too clever a politician to accept a reconciliation without finding out the cause of it; he soon learned what plots were hatching at the French court against the kingdom of Naples, and the whole situation was explained.

Now it was his turn to impose conditions.

He demanded the completion of a marriage between Goffredo, his third son, and Doña Sancia, Alfonso's illegitimate daughter.

He demanded that she should bring her husband as dowry the principality of Squillace and the county of Cariati, with an income of 10,000 ducats and the office of protonotary, one of the seven great crown offices which are independent of royal control.

He demanded for his eldest son, whom Ferdinand the Catholic had just made Duke of Gandia, the principality of Tricarico, the counties of Chiaramonté, Lauria, and Carinola, an income of 12,000 ducats, and the first of the seven great offices which should fall vacant.

He demanded that Virginio Orsini, his ambassador at the Neapolitan court, should be given a third great office, viz. that of Constable, the most important of them all.

Lastly, he demanded that Giuliano della Rovere, one of the five cardinals who had opposed his election and was now taking refuge at Ostia, where the oak whence he took his name and bearings is still to be seen carved on all the walls, should be driven out of that town, and the town itself given over to him.

In exchange, he merely pledged himself never to withdraw from the house of Aragon the investiture of the kingdom of Naples accorded by his predecessors. Ferdinand was paying somewhat dearly for a simple promise; but on the keeping of this promise the legitimacy of his power wholly depended. For the kingdom of Naples was a fief of the Holy See; and to the pope alone belonged the right of pronouncing on the justice of each competitor's pretensions; the continuance of

this investiture was therefore of the highest conceivable importance to Aragon just at the time when Anjou was rising up with an army at her back to dispossess her.

For a year after he mounted the papal throne, Alexander VI had made great strides, as we see, in the extension of his temporal power. In his own hands he held, to be sure, only the least in size of the Italian territories; but by the marriage of his daughter Lucrezia with the lord of Pesaro he was stretching out one hand as far as Venice, while by the marriage of the Prince of Squillace with Doña Sancia, and the territories conceded to the Duke of Gandia, he was touching with the other hand the boundary of Calabria.

When this treaty, so advantageous for himself, was duly signed, he made Cæsar Cardinal of Santa Maria Novella, for Cæsar was always complaining of being left out in the distribution of his father's favours.

Only, as there was as yet no precedent in Church history for a bastard's donning the scarlet, the pope hunted up four false witnesses who declared that Cæsar was the son of Count Ferdinand of Castile; who was, as we know, that valuable person Don Manuel Melchior, and who played the father's part with just as much solemnity as he had played the husband's.

The wedding of the two bastards was most splendid, rich with the double pomp of Church and King. As the pope had settled that the young bridal pair should live near him, Cæsar Borgia, the new cardinal, undertook to manage the ceremony of their entry into Rome and the reception, and Lucrezia, who enjoyed at her father's side an amount of favour hitherto unheard of at the papal court, desired on her part to contribute all the splendour she had it in her power to add. He therefore went to receive the young people with a stately and magnificent escort of lords and cardinals, while she awaited them attended by the loveliest and noblest ladies of Rome, in one of the halls of the Vatican. A throne was there prepared for the pope, and at his feet were cushions for Lucrezia and Doña Sancia. "Thus," writes Tommaso Tommasi, "by the look of the assembly and the sort of conversation that went on

for hours, you would suppose you were present at some magnificent and voluptuous royal audience of ancient Assyria, rather than at the severe consistory of a Roman pontiff, whose solemn duty it is to exhibit in every act the sanctity of the name he bears. But," continues the same historian, "if the Eve of Pentecost was spent in such worthy functions, the celebrations of the coming of the Holy Ghost on the following day were no less decorous and becoming to the spirit of the Church; for thus writes the master of the ceremonies in his journal:—

"'The pope made his entry into the Church of the Holy Apostles, and beside him on the marble steps of the pulpit where the canons of St. Peter are wont to chant the Epistle and Gospel, sat Lucrezia his daughter and Sancia his son's wife: round about them, a disgrace to the Church and a public scandal, were grouped a number of other Roman ladies far more fit to dwell in Messalina's city than in St. Peter's.'"

So at Rome and Naples did men slumber while ruin was at hand; so did they waste their time and squander their money in a vain display of pride; and this was going on while the French, thoroughly alive, were busy laying hands upon the torches with which they would presently set Italy on fire.

Indeed, the designs of Charles VIII for conquest were no longer for anybody a matter of doubt. The young king had sent an embassy to the various Italian States, composed of Perrone dei Baschi, Briçonnet, d'Aubigny, and the president of the Provençal Parliament. The mission of this embassy was to demand from the Italian princes their co-operation in recovering the rights of the crown of Naples for the house of Anjou.

The embassy first approached the Venetians, demanding aid and counsel for the king their master. But the Venetians, faithful to their political tradition, which had gained for them the sobriquet of "the Jews of Christendom," replied that they were not in a position to give any aid to the young king, so long as they had to keep ceaselessly on guard against the Turks; that, as to advice, it would be too great a presumption

in them to give advice to a prince who was surrounded by such experienced generals and such able ministers.

Perrone dei Baschi, when he found he could get no other answer, next made for Florence. Piero dei Medici received him at a grand council, for he summoned on this occasion not only the seventy, but also the gonfalonieri who had sat for the last thirty-four years in the Signoria. The French ambassador put forward his proposal, that the republic should permit their army to pass through her States, and pledge herself in that case to supply for ready money all the necessary victual and fodder. The magnificent republic replied that if Charles VIII had been marching against the Turks instead of against Ferdinand, she would be only too ready to grant everything he wished; but being bound to the house of Aragon by a treaty, she could not betray her ally by yielding to the demands of the King of France.

The ambassadors next turned their steps to Siena. The poor little republic, terrified by the honour of being considered at all, replied that it was her desire to preserve a strict neutrality, that she was too weak to declare beforehand either for or against such mighty rivals, for she would naturally be obliged to join the stronger party. Furnished with this reply, which had at least the merit of frankness, the French envoys proceeded to Rome, and were conducted into the pope's presence, where they demanded the investiture of the kingdom of Naples for their king.

Alexander VI replied that, as his predecessors had granted this investiture to the house of Aragon, he could not take it away, unless it were first established that the house of Anjou had a better claim than the house that was to be dispossessed. Then he represented to Perrone dei Baschi that, as Naples was a fief of the Holy See, to the pope alone the choice of her sovereign properly belonged, and that in consequence to attack the reigning sovereign was to attack the Church itself.

The result of the embassy, we see, was not very promising for Charles VIII; so he resolved to rely on his ally Ludovico

Sforza alone, and to relegate all other questions to the fortunes of war.

A piece of news that reached him about this time strengthened him in this resolution: this was the death of Ferdinand. The old king had caught a severe cold and cough on his return from the hunting-field, and in two days he was at his last gasp. On the 25th of January 1494 he passed away, at the age of seventy, after a thirty-six years' reign, leaving the throne to his elder son, Alfonso, who was immediately chosen as his successor.

Ferdinand never belied his title of "the happy ruler." His death occurred at the very moment when the fortune of his family was changing.

The new king, Alfonso, was not a novice in arms: he had already fought successfully against Florence and Venice, and had driven the Turks out of Otranto; besides, he had the name of being as cunning as his father in the tortuous game of politics so much in vogue at the Italian courts. He did not despair of counting among his allies the very enemy he was at war with when Charles VIII first put forward his pretensions, we mean Bajazet II. So he despatched to Bajazet one of his confidential ministers, Camillo Pandone, to give the Turkish emperor to understand that the expedition to Italy was to the King of France nothing but a blind for approaching the scene of Mahomedan conquests, and that if Charles VIII were once at the Adriatic it would only take him a day or two to get across and attack Macedonia; from there he could easily go by land to Constantinople. Consequently he suggested that Bajazet for the maintenance of their common interests should supply six thousand horse and six thousand infantry: he himself would furnish their pay so long as they were in Italy. It was settled that Pandone should be joined at Tarentum by Giorgio Bucciarda, Alexander VI's envoy, who was commissioned by the pope to engage the Turks to help him against the Christians. But while he was waiting for Bajazet's reply, which might involve a delay of several months, Alfonso requested that a meeting might take place between Piero dei Medici, the pope, and himself, to

take counsel together about important affairs. This was arranged at Vicovaro, near Tivoli, and the three int parties duly met on the appointed day.

The intention of Alfonso, who before leaving Naples settled the disposition of his naval forces, and given his brotner Frederic the command of a fleet that consisted of thirty-six galleys, eighteen large and twelve small vessels, with injunctions to wait at Livorno and keep a watch on the fleet Charles VIII was getting ready at the port of Genoa, was above all things to check with the aid of his allies the progress of operations on land. Without counting the contingent he expected his allies to furnish, he had at his immediate disposal a hundred squadrons of heavy cavalry, twenty men in each, and three thousand bowmen and light horse. He proposed, therefore, to advance at once into Lombardy, to get up a revolution in favour of his nephew Galeazzo, and to drive Ludovico Sforza out of Milan before he could get help from France; so that Charles VIII, at the very time of crossing the Alps, would find an enemy to fight instead of a friend who had promised him a safe passage, men, and money.

This was the scheme of a great politician and a bold commander; but as everybody had come in pursuit of his own interests, regardless of the common good, this plan was very coldly received by Piero dei Medici, who was afraid lest in the war he should play only the same poor part he had been threatened with in the affair of the embassy; by Alexander VI it was rejected, because he reckoned on employing the troops of Alfonso on his own account. He reminded the King of Naples of one of the conditions of the investiture he had promised him, viz. that he should drive out the Cardinal Giuliano della Rovere from the town of Ostia, and give up the town to him, according to the stipulation already agreed upon. Besides, the advantages that had accrued to Virginio Orsini, Alexander's favourite, from his embassy to Naples had brought upon him the ill-will of Prospero and Fabrizio Colonna, who owned nearly all the villages round about Rome. Now the pope could not endure to live in the midst of such powerful enemies, and

the most important matter was to deliver him from all of them, seeing that it was really of moment that he should be at peace who was the head and soul of the league whereof the others were only the body and limbs.

Although Alfonso had clearly seen through the motives of Piero's coldness, and Alexander had not even given him the trouble of seeking his, he was none the less obliged to bow to the will of his allies, leaving the one to defend the Apennines against the French, and helping the other to shake himself free of his neighbours in the Romagna. Consequently he pressed on the siege of Ostia, and added to Virginio's forces, which already amounted to two hundred men of the papal army, a body of his own light horse; this little army was to be stationed round about Rome, and was to enforce obedience from the Colonnas. The rest of his troops Alfonso divided into two parties: one he left in the hand of his son Ferdinand, with orders to scour the Romagna and worry the petty princes into levying and supporting the contingent they had promised, while with the other he himself defended the defiles of the Abruzzi.

On the 23rd of April, at three o'clock in the morning, Alexander VI was freed from the first and fiercest of his foes; Giuliano della Rovere, seeing the impossibility of holding out any longer against Alfonso's troops, embarked on a brigantine which was to carry him to Savona.

From that day forward Virginio Orsini began that famous partisan warfare which reduced the country about Rome to the most pathetic desolation the world has ever seen. During all this time Charles VIII was at Lyons, not only uncertain as to the route he ought to take for getting into Italy, but even beginning to reflect a little on the chances and risks of such an expedition. He had found no sympathy anywhere except with Ludovico Sforza; so it appeared not unlikely that he would have to fight not the kingdom of Naples alone, but the whole of Italy to boot. In his preparations for war he had spent almost all the money at his disposal; the Lady of Beaujeu and the Duke of Bourbon both condemned his enterprise;

Briçonnet, who had advised it, did not venture to support it now; at last Charles, more irresolute than ever, had recalled several regiments that had actually started, when Cardinal Giuliano della Rovere, driven out of Italy by the pope, arrived at Lyons, and presented himself before the king.

The cardinal, full of hatred, full of hope, hastened to Charles, and found him on the point of abandoning that enterprise on which, as Alexander's enemy, della Rovere rested his whole expectation of vengeance. He informed Charles of the quarrelling among his enemies; he showed him that each of them was seeking his own ends—Piero dei Medici the gratification of his pride, the pope the aggrandisement of his house. He pointed out that armed fleets were in the ports of Villefranche, Marseilles, and Genoa, and that these armaments would be lost; he reminded him that he had sent Pierre d'Urfé, his grand equerry, on in advance, to have splendid accommodation prepared in the Spinola and Doria palaces. Lastly, he urged that ridicule and disgrace would fall on him from every side if he renounced an enterprise so loudly vaunted beforehand, for whose successful execution, moreover, he had been obliged to sign three treaties of peace that were all vexatious enough, viz. with Henry VII, with Maximilian, and with Ferdinand the Catholic. Giuliano della Rovere had exercised true insight in probing the vanity of the young king, and Charles VIII did not hesitate for a single moment. He ordered his cousin, the Duke of Orleans (who later on became Louis XII), to take command of the French fleet and bring it to Genoa; he despatched a courier to Antoine de Bessay, Baron de Tricastel, bidding him take to Asti the 2000 Swiss foot-soldiers he had levied in the cantons; lastly, he started himself from Vienne, in Dauphiné, on the 23rd of August 1494, crossed the Alps by Mont Génèvre, without encountering a single body of troops to dispute his passage, descended into Piedmont and Monferrato, both just then governed by women regents, the sovereigns of both principalities being children, Charles John Aimé and William John, aged respectively six and eight.

The two regents appeared before Charles VIII, one at Turin, one at Casale, each at the head of a numerous and brilliant court, and both glittering with jewels and precious stones. Charles, although he quite well knew that for all these friendly demonstrations they were both bound by treaty to his enemy, Alfonso of Naples, treated them all the same with the greatest politeness, and when they made protestations of friendship, asked them to let him have a proof of it, suggesting that they should lend him the diamonds they were covered with. The two regents could do no less than obey the invitation which was really a command. They took off necklaces, rings, and earrings. Charles VIII gave them a receipt accurately drawn up, and pledged the jewels for 24,000 ducats. Then, enriched by this money, he resumed his journey and made his way towards Asti. The Duke of Orleans held the sovereignty of Asti, as we said before, and hither came to meet Charles both Ludovico Sforza and his father-in-law, Hercules d'Este, Duke of Ferrara. They brought with them not only the promised troops and money, but also a court composed of the loveliest women in Italy.

The balls, fêtes, and tourneys began with a magnificence surpassing anything that Italy had ever seen before. But suddenly they were interrupted by the king's illness. This was the first example in Italy of the disease brought by Christopher Columbus from the New World, and was called by Italians the French, by Frenchmen the Italian disease. The probability is that some of Columbus's crew who were at Genoa or thereabouts had already brought over this strange and cruel complaint that counterbalanced the gains of the American gold-mines.

The king's indisposition, however, did not prove so grave as was at first supposed. He was cured by the end of a few weeks, and proceeded on his way towards Pavia, where the young Duke John Galeazzo lay dying. He and the King of France were first cousins, sons of two sisters of the house of Savoy. So Charles VIII was obliged to see him, and went to visit him in the castle where he lived more like prisoner than

lord. He found him half reclining on a couch, pale and emaciated, some said in consequence of luxurious living, others from the effects of a slow but deadly poison. But whether or not the poor young man was desirous of pouring out a complaint to Charles, he did not dare say a word; for his uncle, Ludovico Sforza, never left the King of France for an instant. But at the very moment when Charles VIII was getting up to go, the door opened, and a young woman appeared and threw herself at the king's feet; she was the wife of the unlucky John Galeazzo, and came to entreat his cousin to do nothing against her father Alfonso, nor against her brother Ferdinand. At sight of her, Sforza scowled with an anxious and threatening aspect, for he knew not what impression might be produced on his ally by this scene. But he was soon reassured; for Charles replied that he had advanced too far to draw back now, and that the glory of his name was at stake as well as the interests of his kingdom, and that these two motives were far too important to be sacrificed to any sentiment of pity he might feel, however real and deep it might be and was. The poor young woman, who had based her last hope on this appeal, then rose from her knees and threw herself sobbing into her husband's arms. Charles VIII and Ludovico Sforza took their leave: John Galeazzo was doomed.

Two days after, Charles VIII left for Florence, accompanied by his ally; but scarcely had they reached Parma when a messenger caught them up, and announced to Ludovico that his nephew was just dead: Ludovico at once begged Charles to excuse his leaving him to finish the journey alone; the interests which called him back to Milan were so important, he said, that he could not under the circumstances stay away a single day longer. As a fact he had to make sure of succeeding the man he had assassinated.

But Charles VIII continued his road not without some uneasiness. The sight of the young prince on his deathbed had moved him deeply, for at the bottom of his heart he was convinced that Ludovico Sforza was his murderer; and a

murderer might very well be a traitor. He was going forward into an unfamiliar country, with a declared enemy in front of him and a doubtful friend behind: he was now at the entrance to the mountains, and as his army had no store of provisions and only lived from hand to mouth, a forced delay, however short, would mean famine. In front of him was Fivizzano, nothing, it is true, but a village surrounded by walls, but beyond Fivizzano lay Sarzano and Pietra Santa, both of them considered impregnable fortresses; worse than this, they were coming into a part of the country that was especially unhealthy in October, had no natural product except oil, and even procured its own corn from neighbouring provinces: it was plain that a whole army might perish there in a few days either from scarcity of food or from the unwholesome air, both of which were more disastrous than the impediments offered at every step by the nature of the ground. The situation was grave; but the pride of Piero dei Medici came once more to the rescue of the fortunes of Charles VIII.

CHAPTER V

PIERO DEI MEDICI had, as we may remember, undertaken to hold the entrance to Tuscany against the French; when, however, he saw his enemy coming down from the Alps, he felt less confident about his own strength, and demanded help from the pope; but scarcely had the rumour of foreign invasion began to spread in the Romagna, than the Colonna family declared themselves the French king's men, and collecting all their forces seized Ostia, and there awaited the coming of the French fleet to offer a passage through to Rome. The pope, therefore, instead of sending troops to Florence, was obliged to recall all his soldiers to be near the capital; the only promise he made to Piero was that if Bajazet should send him the troops that he had been asking for, he would despatch that army for him to make use of. Piero dei Medici had not yet taken any resolution or formed any plan, when he suddenly heard two startling pieces of news. A jealous neighbour of his, the Marquis of Torderiovo, had betrayed to the French the weak side of Fivizzano, so that they had taken it by storm, and had put its soldiers and inhabitants to the edge of the sword; on another side, Gilbert of Montpensier, who had been lighting up the sea-coast so as to keep open the communications between the French army and their fleet, had met with a detachment sent by Paolo Orsini to Sarzano, to reinforce the garrison there, and after an hour's fighting had cut it to pieces. No quarter had been granted to any of the prisoners; every man the French could get hold of they had massacred.

This was the first occasion on which the Italians, accustomed as they were to the chivalrous contests of the fifteenth

century, found themselves in contact with savage foreigners, who, less advanced in civilisation, had not yet come to consider war as a clever game, but looked upon it as simply a mortal conflict. So the news of these two butcheries produced a tremendous sensation at Florence, the richest city in Italy, and the most prosperous in commerce and in art. Every Florentine imagined the French to be like an army of those ancient barbarians who were wont to extinguish fire with blood. The prophecies of Savonarola, who had predicted the foreign invasion and the destruction that should follow it, were recalled to the minds of all; and so much perturbation was evinced that Piero dei Medici, bent on getting peace at any price, forced a decree upon the republic whereby she was to send an embassy to the conqueror; and obtained leave, resolved as he was to deliver himself in person into the hands of the French monarch, to act as one of the ambassadors. He accordingly quitted Florence, accompanied by four other messengers, and on his arrival at Pietra Santa, sent to ask from Charles VIII a safe-conduct for himself alone. The day after he made this request, Briçonnet and de Piennes came to fetch him, and led him into the presence of Charles VIII.

Piero dei Medici, in spite of his name and influence, was in the eyes of the French nobility, who considered it a dishonourable thing to concern oneself with art or industry, nothing more than a rich merchant, with whom it would be absurd to stand upon any very strict ceremony. So Charles VIII received him on horseback, and addressing him with a haughty air, as a master might address a servant, demanded whence came this pride of his that made him dispute his entrance into Tuscany. Piero dei Medici replied that, with the actual consent of Louis XI, his father Lorenzo had concluded a treaty of alliance with Ferdinand of Naples; that accordingly he had acted in obedience to prior obligations, but as he did not wish to push too far his devotion to the house of Aragon or his opposition to France, he was ready to do whatever Charles VIII might demand of him. The king, who had never looked for such humility in his enemy, de-

manded that Sarzano should be given up to him: to this Piero dei Medici at once consented. Then the conqueror, wishing to see how far the ambassador of the magnificent republic would extend his politeness, replied that this concession was far from satisfying him, and that he still must have the keys of Pietra Santa, Pisa, Librafatta, and Livorno. Piero saw no more difficulty about these than about Sarzano, and consented on Charles's mere promise by word of mouth to restore the towns when he had achieved the conquest of Naples. At last Charles VIII, seeing that this man who had been sent out to negotiate with him was very easy to manage, exacted as a final condition, a *sine quâ non*, however, of his royal protection, that the magnificent republic should lend him the sum of 200,000 florins. Piero found it no harder to dispose of money than of fortresses, and replied that his fellow-citizens would be happy to render this service to their new ally. Then Charles VIII set him on horseback, and ordered him to go on in front, so as to begin to carry out his promises by yielding up the four fortresses he had insisted on having. Piero obeyed, and the French army, led by the grandson of Cosimo the Great and the son of Lorenzo the Magnificent, continued its triumphal march through Tuscany.

On his arrival at Lucca, Piero dei Medici learnt that his concessions to the King of France were making a terrible commotion at Florence. The magnificent republic had supposed that what Charles VIII wanted was simply a passage through her territory, so when the news came there was a general feeling of discontent, which was augmented by the return of the other ambassadors, whom Piero had not even consulted when he took action as he did. Piero considered it necessary that he should return, so he asked Charles's permission to precede him to the capital. As he had fulfilled all his promises, except the matter of the loan, which could not be settled anywhere but at Florence, the king saw no objection, and the very evening after he quitted the French army Piero returned incognito to his palace in the Via Larga.

The next day he proposed to present himself before the

Signoria, but when he arrived at the Piazza del Palazzo Vecchio, he perceived the gonfaloniere Jacopo de Nerli coming towards him, signalling to him that it was useless to attempt to go farther, and pointing out to him the figure of Luca Corsini standing at the gate, sword in hand: behind him stood guards, ordered, if need were, to dispute his passage. Piero dei Medici, amazed by an opposition that he was experiencing for the first time in his life, did not attempt resistance. He went home, and wrote to his brother-in-law, Paolo Orsini, to come and help him with his gendarmes. Unluckily for him, his letter was intercepted. The Signoria considered that it was an attempt at rebellion. They summoned the citizens to their aid; they armed hastily, sallied forth in crowds, and thronged about the piazza of the palace. Meanwhile Cardinal Gian dei Medici had mounted on horseback, and under the impression that the Orsini were coming to the rescue, was riding about the streets of Florence, accompanied by his servants and uttering his battle-cry, "Palle, Palle." But times had changed: there was no echo to the cry, and when the cardinal reached the Via dei Calizaioli, a threatening murmur was the only response, and he understood that instead of trying to arouse Florence he had much better get away before the excitement ran too high. He promptly retired to his own palace, expecting to find there his two brothers, Piero and Giuliano. But they, under the protection of Orsini and his gendarmes, had made their escape by the Porto San Gallo. The peril was imminent, and Gian dei Medici wished to follow their example; but wherever he went he was met by a clamour that grew more and more threatening. At last, as he saw that the danger was constantly increasing, he dismounted from his horse and ran into a house that he found standing open. This house by a lucky chance communicated with a convent of Franciscans; one of the friars lent the fugitive his dress, and the cardinal, under the protection of this humble incognito, contrived at last to get outside Florence, and joined his two brothers in the Apennines.

The same day the Medici were declared traitors and rebels,

and ambassadors were sent to the King of France. They found him at Pisa, where he was granting independence to the town which eighty-seven years ago had fallen under the rule of the Florentines. Charles VIII made no reply to the envoys, but merely announced that he was going to march on Florence.

Such a reply, one may easily understand, terrified the republic. Florence had no time to prepare a defence, and no strength in her present state to make one. But all the powerful houses assembled and armed their own servants and retainers, and awaited the issue, intending not to begin hostilities, but to defend themselves should the French make an attack. It was agreed that if any necessity should arise for taking up arms, the bells of the various churches in the town should ring a peal and so serve as a general signal. Such a resolution was perhaps of more significant moment in Florence than it could have been in any other town. For the palaces that still remain from that period are virtually fortresses, and the eternal fights between Guelphs and Ghibellines had familiarised the Tuscan people with street warfare.

The king appeared, on the 17th of November, in the evening, at the gate of San Friano. He found there the nobles of Florence clad in their most magnificent apparel, accompanied by priests chanting hymns, and by a mob who were full of joy at any prospect of change, and hoped for a return of liberty after the fall of the Medici. Charles VIII stopped for a moment under a sort of gilded canopy that had been prepared for him, and replied in a few evasive words to the welcoming speeches which were addressed to him by the Signoria; then he asked for his lance, he set it in rest, and gave the order to enter the town, the whole of which he paraded with his army following him with arms erect, and then went down to the palace of the Medici, which had been prepared for him.

The next day negotiations commenced; but everyone was out of his reckoning. The Florentines had received Charles VIII as a guest, but he had entered the city as a conqueror.

So when the deputies of the Signoria spoke of ratifying the treaty of Piero dei Medici, the king replied that such a treaty no longer existed, as they had banished the man who made it; that he had conquered Florence, as he proved the night before, when he entered lance in hand; that he should retain the sovereignty, and would make any further decision whenever it pleased him to do so; further, he would let them know later on whether he would reinstate the Medici, or whether he would delegate his authority to the Signoria: all they had to do was to come back the next day, and he would give them his ultimatum in writing.

This reply threw Florence into a great state of consternation; but the Florentines were confirmed in their resolution of making a stand. Charles, for his part, had been astonished by the great number of the inhabitants; not only was every street he had passed through thickly lined with people, but every house from garret to basement seemed overflowing with human beings. Florence indeed, thanks to her rapid increase in population, could muster nearly 150,000 souls.

The next day, at the appointed hour, the deputies made their appearance to meet the king. They were again introduced into his presence, and the discussion was reopened. At last, as they were coming to no sort of understanding, the royal secretary, standing at the foot of the throne upon which Charles VIII sat with covered head, unfolded a paper and began to read, article by article, the conditions imposed by the King of France. But scarcely had he read a third of the document when the discussion began more hotly than ever before. Then Charles VIII said that thus it should be, or he would order his trumpets to be sounded. Hereupon Piero Capponi, secretary to the republic, commonly called the Scipio of Florence, snatched from the royal secretary's hand the shameful proposal of capitulation, and tearing it to pieces, exclaimed—

"Very good, sire; blow your trumpets, and we will ring our bells."

He threw the pieces in the face of the amazed reader, and

dashed out of the room to give the terrible order that would convert the streets of Florence into a battlefield.

Still, against all probabilities, this bold answer saved the town. The French supposed, from such audacious words, addressed as they were to men who so far had encountered no single obstacle, that the Florentines were possessed of sure resources, to them unknown: the few prudent men who retained any influence over the king advised him accordingly to abate his pretensions; the result was that Charles VIII offered new and more reasonable conditions, which were accepted, signed by both parties, and proclaimed on the 26th of November during mass in the cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore.

These were the conditions:—

The Signoria were to pay to Charles VIII, as subsidy, the sum of 120,000 florins, in three instalments;

The Signoria were to remove the sequestration imposed upon the property of the Medici, and to recall the decree that set a price on their heads;

The Signoria were to engage to pardon the Pisans, on condition of their again submitting to the rule of Florence;

Lastly, the Signoria were to recognise the claims of the Duke of Milan over Sarzano and Pietra Santa, and these claims thus recognised, were to be settled by arbitration.

In exchange for this, the King of France pledged himself to restore the fortresses that had been given up to him, either after he had made himself master of the town of Naples, or when this war should be ended by a peace or a two years' truce, or else when, for any reason whatsoever, he should have quitted Italy.

Two days after this proclamation, Charles VIII, much to the joy of the Signoria, left Florence, and advanced towards Rome by the route of Poggibondi and Siena.

The pope began to be affected by the general terror: he had heard of the massacres of Fivizzano, of Lunigiane, and of Imola; he knew that Piero dei Medici had handed over the Tuscan fortresses, that Florence had succumbed, and

that Catherine Sforza had made terms with the conqueror; he saw the broken remnants of the Neapolitan troops pass disheartened through Rome, to rally their strength in the Abruzzi, and thus he found himself exposed to an enemy who was advancing upon him with the whole of the Romagna under his control from one sea to the other, in a line of march extending from Piombino to Ancona.

It was at this juncture that Alexander VI received his answer from Bajazet II: the reason of so long a delay was that the pope's envoy and the Neapolitan ambassador had been stopped by Gian della Rovere, the Cardinal Giuliano's brother, just as they were disembarking at Sinigaglia. They were charged with a verbal answer, which was that the sultan at this moment was busied with a triple war, first with the Sultan of Egypt, secondly with the King of Hungary, and thirdly with the Greeks of Macedonia and Epirus; and therefore he could not, with all the will in the world, help His Holiness with armed men. But the envoys were accompanied by a favourite of the sultan's bearing a private letter to Alexander VI, in which Bajazet offered on certain conditions to help him with money. Although, as we see, the messengers had been stopped on the way, the Turkish envoy had all the same found a means of getting his despatch sent to the pope: we give it here in all its naïveté.

"Bajazet the Sultan, son of the Sultan Mahomet II, by the grace of God Emperor of Asia and Europe, to the Father and Lord of all the Christians, Alexander VI, Roman pontiff and pope by the will of heavenly Providence, first, greetings that we owe him and bestow with all our heart. We make known to your Highness, by the envoy of your Mightiness, Giorgio Bucciarda, that we have been apprised of your convalescence, and received the news thereof with great joy and comfort. Among other matters, the said Bucciarda has brought us word that the King of France, now marching against your Highness, has shown a desire to take under his protection our brother D'jem, who is now under yours—a thing which is not only against our will, but which would also be the cause of great

injury to your Highness and to all Christendom. In turning the matter over with your envoy Giorgio, we have devised a scheme most conducive to peace and most advantageous and honourable for your Highness; at the same time satisfactory to ourselves personally: it would be well if our aforesaid brother D'jem, who being a man is liable to death, and who is now in the hands of your Highness, should quit this world as soon as possible, seeing that his departure, a real good to him in his position, would be of great use to your Highness, and very conducive to your peace, while at the same time it would be very agreeable to us, your friend. If this proposition is favourably received, as we hope, by your Highness, in your desire to be friendly towards us, it would be advisable both in the interests of your Highness and for our own satisfaction that it should occur rather sooner than later, and by the surest means you might be pleased to employ; so that our said brother D'jem might pass from the pains of this world into a better and more peaceful life, where at last he may find repose. If your Highness should adopt this plan and send us the body of our brother, we the above-named Sultan Bajazet pledge ourselves to send to your Highness, wheresoever and by whatsoever hands you please, the sum of 300,000 ducats, with which sum you could purchase some fair domain for your children. In order to facilitate this purchase, we would be willing, while awaiting the issue, to place the 300,000 ducats in the hands of a third party, so that your Highness might be quite certain of receiving the money on an appointed day, in return for the despatch of our brother's body. Moreover, we promise your Highness herewith, for your greater satisfaction, that never, so long as you shall remain on the pontifical throne, shall there be any hurt done to the Christians, neither by us, nor by our servants, nor by any of our compatriots, of whatsoever kind or condition they may be, neither on sea nor on land. And for the still further satisfaction of your Highness, and in order that no doubt whatever may remain concerning the fulfilment of our promises, we have sworn and affirmed in the presence of Bucciarda, your envoy,

by the true God whom we adore and by our holy Gospels, that they shall be faithfully kept from the first point unto the last. And now for the final and complete assurance of your Highness, in order that no doubt may still remain in your heart, and that you may be once again and profoundly convinced of our good faith, we the aforesaid Sultan Bajazet do swear by the true God, who has created the heavens and the earth and all that therein is, that we will religiously observe all that has been above said and declared, and in the future will do nothing and undertake nothing that may be contrary to the interests of your Highness.

"Given at Constantinople, in our palace, on the 12th of September A.D. 1494."

This letter was the cause of great joy to the Holy Father: the aid of four or five thousand Turks would be insufficient under the present circumstances, and would only serve to compromise the head of Christendom, while the sum of 300,000 ducats—that is, nearly a million francs—was good to get in any sort of circumstances. It is true that, so long as D'jem lived, Alexander was drawing an income of 180,000 livres, which as a life annuity represented a capital of nearly two millions; but when one needs ready money, one ought to be able to make a sacrifice in the way of discount. All the same, Alexander formed no definite plan, resolved on acting as circumstances should indicate.

But it was a more pressing business to decide how he should behave to the King of France: he had never anticipated the success of the French in Italy, and we have seen that he laid all the foundations of his family's future grandeur upon his alliance with the house of Aragon. But here was this house tottering, and a volcano more terrible than her own Vesuvius was threatening to swallow up Naples. He must therefore change his policy, and attach himself to the victor,—no easy matter, for Charles VIII was bitterly annoyed with the pope for having refused him the investiture and given it to Aragon.

In consequence, he sent Cardinal Francesco Piccolomini

as an envoy to the king. This choice looked like a mistake at first, seeing that the ambassador was a nephew of Pius II, who had vigorously opposed the house of Anjou; but Alexander in acting thus had a second design, which could not be discerned by those around him. In fact, he had divined that Charles would not be quick to receive his envoy, and that, in the parleyings to which his unwillingness must give rise, Piccolomini would necessarily be brought into contact with the young king's advisers. Now, besides his ostensible mission to the king, Piccolomini had also secret instructions for the more influential among his counsellors. These were Briçonnet and Philippe de Luxembourg; and Piccolomini was authorised to promise a cardinal's hat to each of them. The result was just what Alexander had foreseen: his envoy could not gain admission to Charles, and was obliged to confer with the people about him. This was what the pope wished. Piccolomini returned to Rome with the king's refusal, but with a promise from Briçonnet and Phliippe de Luxembourg that they would use all their influence with Charles in favour of the Holy Father, and prepare him to receive a fresh embassy.

But the French all this time were advancing, and never stopped more than forty-eight hours in any town, so that it became more and more urgent to get something settled with Charles. The king had entered Siena and Viterbo without striking a blow; Yves d'Alègre and Louis de Ligny had taken over Ostia from the hands of the Colonnas; Cività Vecchia and Corneto had opened their gates; the Orsini had submitted; even Gian Sforza, the pope's son-in-law, had retired from the alliance with Aragon. Alexander accordingly judged that the moment had come to abandon his ally, and sent to Charles the Bishops of Concordia and Terni, and his confessor, Monsignore Graziano. They were charged to renew to Briçonnet and Philippe de Luxembourg the promise of the cardinalship, and had full powers of negotiation in the name of their master, both in case Charles should wish to include Alfonso II in the treaty, and in case he should refuse to sign

an agreement with any other but the pope alone. They found the mind of Charles influenced now by the insinuations of Giuliano della Rovere, who, himself a witness of the pope's simony, pressed the king to summon a council and depose the head of the Church, and now by the secret support given him by the Bishops of Mans and St. Malo. The end of it was that the king decided to form his own opinion about the matter and settle nothing beforehand, and continued his route, sending the ambassadors back to the pope, with the addition of the Marshal de Gié, the Seneschal de Beaucaire, and Jean de Gannay, first president of the Paris Parliament. They were ordered to say to the pope—

(1) That the king wished above all things to be admitted into Rome without resistance; that, on condition of a voluntary, frank, and loyal admission, he would respect the authority of the Holy Father and the privileges of the Church;

(2) That the king desired that D'jem should be given up to him, in order that he might make use of him against the sultan when he should carry the war into Macedonia or Turkey or the Holy Land;

(3) That the remaining conditions were so unimportant that they could be brought forward at the first conference.

The ambassadors added that the French army was now only two days distant from Rome, and that in the evening of the day after next Charles would probably arrive in person to demand an answer from His Holiness.

It was useless to think of parleying with a prince who acted in such expeditious fashion as this. Alexander accordingly warned Ferdinand to quit Rome as soon as possible, in the interests of his own personal safety. But Ferdinand refused to listen to a word, and declared that he would not go out at one gate while Charles VIII came in at another. His sojourn was not long. Two days later, about eleven o'clock in the morning, a sentinel placed on a watch-tower at the top of the Castle S. Angelo, whither the pope had retired, cried out that the vanguard of the enemy was visible on the horizon. At once Alexander and the Duke of Calabria went up on the terrace

which tops the fortress, and assured themselves with their own eyes that what the soldier said was true. Then, and not till then, did the Duke of Calabria mount on horseback, and, to use his own words, went out at the gate of San Sebastiano at the same moment that the French vanguard halted five hundred feet from the Gate of the People. This was on the 31st of December 1494.

At three in the afternoon the whole army had arrived, and the vanguard began their march, drums beating, ensigns unfurled. It was composed, says Paolo Giove, an eye-witness (book ii. p. 41 of his History), of Swiss and German soldiers, with short tight coats of various colours: they were armed with short swords, with steel edges like those of the ancient Romans, and carried ashen lances ten feet long, with straight and sharp iron spikes: only one-fourth of their number bore halberts instead of lances, the spikes cut into the form of an axe and surmounted by a four-cornered spike, to be used both for cutting like an axe and piercing like a bayonet: the first row of each battalion wore helmets and cuirasses which protected the head and chest, and when the men were drawn up for battle they presented to the enemy a triple array of iron spikes, which they could raise or lower like the spines of a porcupine. To each thousand of the soldiery were attached a hundred fusiliers: their officers, to distinguish them from the men, wore lofty plumes on their helmets.

After the Swiss infantry came the archers of Gascony: there were five thousand of them, wearing a very simple dress, that contrasted with the rich costume of the Swiss soldiers, the shortest of whom would have been a head higher than the tallest of the Gascons. But they were excellent soldiers, full of courage, very light, and with a special reputation for quickness in stringing and drawing their iron bows.

Behind them rode the cavalry, the flower of the French nobility, with their gilded helmets and neckbands, their velvet and silk surcoats, their swords each of which had its own name, their shields each telling of territorial estates, and their colours each telling of a lady-love. Besides defensive arms, each man

bore a lance in his hand, like an Italian gendarme, with a solid grooved end, and on his saddle-bow a quantity of weapons, some for cutting and some for thrusting. Their horses were large and strong, but they had their tails and ears cropped according to the French custom. These horses, unlike those of the Italian gendarmes, wore no caparisons of dressed leather, which made them more exposed to attack. Every knight was followed by three horses—the first ridden by a page in armour like his own, the two others by equerries who were called lateral auxiliaries, because in a fray they fought to right and left of their chief. This troop was not only the most magnificent, but the most considerable in the whole army; for as there were 2500 knights, they formed each with their three followers a total of 10,000 men. Five thousand light horse rode next, who carried huge wooden bows, and shot long arrows from a distance like English archers. They were a great help in battle, for moving rapidly wherever aid was required, they could fly in a moment from one wing to another, from the rear to the van, then when their quivers were empty could go off at so swift a gallop that neither infantry nor heavy cavalry could pursue them. Their defensive armour consisted of a helmet and half-cuirass; some of them carried a short lance as well, with which to pin their stricken foe to the ground; they all wore long cloaks adorned with shoulder-knots, and plates of silver whereon the arms of their chief were emblazoned.

At last came the young king's escort: there were four hundred archers, among whom a hundred Scots formed a line on each side, while two hundred of the most illustrious knights marched on foot beside the prince, carrying heavy arms on their shoulders. In the midst of this magnificent escort advanced Charles VIII, both he and his horse covered with splendid armour; on his right and left marched Cardinal Ascanio Sforza, the Duke of Milan's brother, and Cardinal Giuliano della Rovere, of whom we have spoken so often, who was afterwards Pope Julius II. The Cardinals Colonna and Savelli followed immediately after, and behind them came Prospero and Fabrizio Colonna, and all the Italian princes and

generals who had thrown in their lot with the conqueror, and were marching intermingled with the great French lords.

For a long time the crowd that had collected to see all these foreign soldiers go by, a sight so new and strange, listened uneasily to a dull sound which got nearer and nearer, and seemed like the rolling of thunder: soon the earth visibly trembled, the glass shook in the windows, and behind the king's escort thirty-six bronze cannons were seen to advance, bumping along as they lay on their gun-carriages. These cannons were eight feet in length; and as their mouths were large enough to hold a man's head, it was supposed that each of these terrible machines, scarcely known as yet to the Italians, weighed nearly six thousand pounds. After the cannons came culverins sixteen feet long, and then falconets, the smallest of which shot balls the size of a grenade. This formidable artillery brought up the rear of the procession, and formed the hindmost guard of the French army.

It was six hours since the front guard entered the town; and as it was now night and for every six artillery-men there was a torch-bearer, this illumination gave to the objects around a more gloomy character than they would have shown in the sunlight. The young king was to take up his quarters in the Palazzo di Venezia, and all the artillery was directed towards the piazza and the neighbouring streets. The remainder of the army was dispersed about the town. The same evening, they brought to the king, less to do honour to him than to assure him of his safety, the keys of Rome and the keys of the Belvedere Garden. Just the same thing had been done for the Duke of Calabria.

The pope, as we said, had retired to the Castle S. Angelo with only six cardinals, so from the day after his arrival the young king had around him a court of very different brilliance from that of the head of the Church. Then arose anew the question of a convocation to prove Alexander's simony and proceed to depose him; but the king's chief counsellors, gained over, as we know, pointed out that this was a bad moment to excite a new schism in the Church, just when

preparations were being made for war against the infidels. As this was also the king's private opinion, there was not much trouble in persuading him, and he made up his mind to treat with His Holiness.

But the negotiations had scarcely begun when they had to be broken off; for the first thing Charles VIII demanded was the surrender of the Castle S. Angelo, and as the pope saw in this castle his only refuge, it was the last thing he chose to give up. Twice, in his youthful impatience, Charles wanted to take by force what he could not get by goodwill, and had his cannons directed towards the Holy Father's dwelling-place; but the pope was unmoved by these demonstrations; and obstinate as he was, this time it was the French king who gave way.

This article, therefore, was set aside, and the following conditions were agreed upon:—

That there should be from this day forward between His Majesty the King of France and the Holy Father a sincere friendship and a firm alliance;

Before the completion of the conquest of the kingdom of Naples, the King of France should occupy, for the advantage and accommodation of his army, the fortresses of Cività Vecchia, Terracina, and Spoleto;

Lastly, the Cardinal Valentino (this was now the name of Cæsar Borgia, after his archbishopric of Valencia) should accompany the king in the capacity of apostolic ambassador, really as a hostage.

These conditions fixed, the ceremonial of an interview was arranged. The king left the Palazzo di Venezia and went to live in the Vatican. At the appointed time he entered by the door of a garden that adjoined the palace, while the pope, who had not had to quit the Castle S. Angelo, thanks to a corridor communicating between the two palaces, came down into the same garden by another gate. The result of this arrangement was that the king the next moment perceived the pope, and knelt down; but the pope pretended not to see him, and the king advancing a few paces, knelt a second

time; as His Holiness was at that moment screened by some masonry, this supplied him with another excuse, and the king went on with the performance, got up again, once more advanced several steps, and was on the point of kneeling down the third time face to face, when the Holy Father at last perceived him, and, walking towards him as though he would prevent him from kneeling, took off his own hat, and pressing him to his heart, raised him up and tenderly kissed his forehead, refusing to cover until the king had put his cap upon his head, with the aid of the pope's own hands. Then, after they had stood for a moment, exchanging polite and friendly speeches, the king lost no time in praying His Holiness to be so good as to receive into the Sacred College William Briçonnet, the Bishop of St. Malo. As this matter had been agreed upon beforehand by that prelate and His Holiness, though the king was not aware of it, Alexander was pleased to get credit by promptly granting the request; and he instantly ordered one of his attendants to go to the house of his son, Cardinal Valentino, and fetch a cape and hat. Then taking the king by the hand, he conducted him into the hall of Papagalli, where the ceremony was to take place of the admission of the new cardinal. The solemn oath of obedience which was to be taken by Charles to His Holiness as supreme head of the Christian Church was postponed till the following day.

When that solemn day arrived, every person important in Rome, noble, cleric, or soldier, assembled around His Holiness. Charles, on his side, made his approach to the Vatican with a splendid following of princes, prelates, and captains. At the threshold of the palace he found four cardinals who had arrived before him: two of them placed themselves one on each side of him, the two others behind him, and all his retinue following, they traversed a long line of apartments full of guards and servants, and at last arrived in the reception-room, where the pope was seated on his throne, with his son, Cæsar Borgia, behind him. On his arrival at the door, the King of France began the usual ceremonial, and when he had gone on from

genuflexions to kissing the feet, the hand, and the forehead, he stood up, while the first president of the Parliament of Paris, in his turn stepping forward, said in a loud voice—

"Very Holy Father, behold my king ready to offer to your Holiness that oath of obedience that he owes to you; but in France it is customary that he who offers himself as vassal to his lord shall receive in exchange therefor such boons as he may demand. His Majesty, therefore, while he pledges himself for his own part to behave unto your Holiness with a munificence even greater than that wherewith your Holiness shall behave unto him, is here to beg urgently that you accord him three favours. These favours are: first, the confirmation of privileges already granted to the king, to the queen his wife, and to the dauphin his son; secondly, the investiture, for himself and his successors, of the kingdom of Naples; lastly, the surrender to him of the person of the sultan D'jem, brother of the Turkish emperor."

At this address the pope was for a moment stupefied; for he did not expect these three demands, which were moreover made so publicly by Charles that no manner of refusal was possible. But quickly recovering his presence of mind, he replied to the king that he would willingly confirm the privileges that had been accorded to the house of France by his predecessors; that he might therefore consider his first demand granted; that the investiture of the kingdom was an affair that required deliberation in a council of cardinals, but he would do all he possibly could to induce them to accede to the king's desire; lastly, he must defer the affair of the sultan's brother till a time more opportune for discussing it with the Sacred College, but would venture to say that, as this surrender could not fail to be for the good of Christendom, as it was demanded for the purpose of assuring further the success of a crusade, it would not be his fault if on this point also the king should not be satisfied.

At this reply, Charles bowed his head in sign of satisfaction, and the first president stood up, uncovered, and resumed his discourse as follows:—

"Very Holy Father, it is an ancient custom among Christian kings, especially the Most Christian kings of France, to signify, through their ambassadors, the respect they feel for the Holy See and the sovereign pontiffs whom Divine Providence places thereon; but the Most Christian king, having felt a desire to visit the tombs of the holy apostles, has been pleased to pay this religious debt, which he regards as a sacred duty, not by ambassadors or by delegates, but in his own person. This is why, Very Holy Father, His Majesty the King of France is here to acknowledge you as the true vicar of Christ, the legitimate successor of the apostles St. Peter and St. Paul, and with promise and vow renders you that filial and respectful devotion which the kings his predecessors have been accustomed to promise and vow, devoting himself and all his strength to the service of your Holiness and the interests of the Holy See."

The pope arose with a joyful heart; for this oath, so publicly made, removed all his fears about a council; so inclined from this moment to yield to the King of France anything he might choose to ask, he took him by his left hand and made him a short and friendly reply, dubbing him the Church's eldest son. The ceremony over, they left the hall, the pope always holding the king's hand in his, and in this way they walked as far as the room where the sacred vestments are put off; the pope feigned a wish to conduct the king to his own apartments, but the king would not suffer this, and, embracing once more, they separated, each to retire to his own domicile.

The king remained eight days longer at the Vatican, then returned to the Palazzo San Marco. During these eight days all his demands were debated and settled to his satisfaction. The Bishop of Mans was made cardinal; the investiture of the kingdom of Naples was promised to the conqueror; lastly, it was agreed that on his departure the King of France should receive from the pope's hand the brother of the Emperor of Constantinople, for a sum of 120,000 livres. But the pope, desiring to extend to the utmost the hospitality he had been bestowing, invited D'jem to dinner on the very day that he was to leave Rome with his new protector.

When the moment of departure arrived, Charles mounted his horse in full armour, and with a numerous and brilliant following made his way to the Vatican; arrived at the door, he dismounted, and leaving his escort at the Piazza of St. Peter, went up with a few gentlemen only. He found His Holiness waiting for him, with Cardinal Valentino on his right, and on his left D'jem, who, as we said before, was dining with him, and round the table thirteen cardinals. The king at once, bending on his knee, demanded the pope's benediction, and stooped to kiss his feet. But this Alexander would not suffer; he took him in his arms, and with the lips of a father and heart of an enemy, kissed him tenderly on his forehead. Then the pope introduced the son of Mahomet II, who was a fine young man, with something noble and regal in his air, presenting in his magnificent oriental costume a great contrast in its fashion and amplitude to the narrow, severe cut of the Christian apparel. D'jem advanced to Charles without humility and without pride, and, like an emperor's son treating with a king, kissed his hand and then his shoulder; then, turning towards the Holy Father, he said in Italian, which he spoke very well, that he entreated he would recommend him to the young king, who was prepared to take him under his protection, assuring the pontiff that he should never have to repent giving him his liberty, and telling Charles that he hoped he might some day be proud of him, if after taking Naples he carried out his intention of going on to Greece. These words were spoken with so much dignity and at the same time with such gentleness, that the King of France loyally and frankly grasped the young sultan's hand, as though he were his companion-in-arms. Then Charles took a final farewell of the pope, and went down to the piazza. There he was awaited by Cardinal Valentino, who was about to accompany him, as we know, as a hostage, and who had remained behind to exchange a few words with his father. In a moment Cæsar Borgia appeared, riding on a splendidly harnessed mule, and behind him were led six magnificent horses, a present from the Holy Father to the King of France. Charles at once mounted

one of these, to do honour to the gift the pope had just conferred on him, and leaving Rome with the rest of his troops, pursued his way towards Marino, where he arrived the same evening.

He learned there that Alfonso, belying his reputation as a clever politician and great general, had just embarked with all his treasures in a flotilla of four galleys, leaving the care of the war and the management of his kingdom to his son Ferdinand. Thus everything went well for the triumphant march of Charles: the gates of towns opened of themselves at his approach, his enemies fled without waiting for his coming, and before he had fought a single battle he had won for himself the surname of Conqueror.

The day after at dawn the army started once more, and after marching the whole day, stopped in the evening at Velletri. There the king, who had been on horseback since the morning, with Cardinal Valentino and D'jem, left the former at his lodging, and taking D'jem with him, went on to his own. Then Cæsar Borgia, who among the army baggage had twenty very heavy waggons of his own, had one of these opened, took out a splendid cabinet with the silver necessary for his table, and gave orders for his supper to be prepared, as he had done the night before. Meanwhile, night had come on, and he shut himself up in a private chamber, where, stripping off his cardinal's costume, he put on a groom's dress. Thanks to this disguise, he issued from the house that had been assigned for his accommodation without being recognised, traversed the streets, passed through the gates, and gained the open country. Nearly half a league outside the town, a servant awaited him with two swift horses. Cæsar, who was an excellent rider, sprang to the saddle, and he and his companion at full gallop retraced the road to Rome, where they arrived at break of day. Cæsar got down at the house of one Flores, auditor of the *rota*, where he procured a fresh horse and suitable clothes; then he flew at once to his mother, who gave a cry of joy when she saw him; for so silent and mysterious was the cardinal for all the world beside, and even for her, that he had not said a word of his early return to

Rome. The cry of joy uttered by Rosa Vanozza when she beheld her son was far more a cry of vengeance than of love. One evening, while everybody was at the rejoicings in the Vatican, when Charles VIII and Alexander VI were swearing a friendship which neither of them felt, and exchanging oaths that were broken beforehand, a messenger from Rosa Vanozza had arrived with a letter to Cæsar, in which she begged him to come at once to her house in the Via della Longara. Cæsar questioned the messenger, but he only replied that he could tell him nothing, that he would learn all he cared to know from his mother's own lips. So, as soon as he was at liberty, Cæsar, in layman's dress and wrapped in a large cloak, quitted the Vatican and made his way towards the church of Regina Cœli, in the neighbourhood of which, it will be remembered, was the house where the pope's mistress lived.

As he approached his mother's house, Cæsar began to observe the signs of strange devastation. The street was scattered with the wreck of furniture and strips of precious stuffs. As he arrived at the foot of the little flight of steps that led to the entrance gate, he saw that the windows were broken and the remains of torn curtains were fluttering in front of them. Not understanding what this disorder could mean, he rushed into the house and through several deserted and wrecked apartments. At last, seeing light in one of the rooms, he went in, and there found his mother sitting on the remains of a chest made of ebony all inlaid with ivory and silver. When she saw Cæsar, she rose, pale and dishevelled, and pointing to the desolation around her, exclaimed—

"Look, Cæsar; behold the work of your new friends."

"But what does it mean, mother?" asked the cardinal. "Whence comes all this disorder?"

"From the serpent," replied Rosa Vanozza, gnashing her teeth,—"from the serpent you have warmed in your bosom. He has bitten me, fearing no doubt that his teeth would be broken on you."

"Who has done this?" cried Cæsar. "Tell me, and, by Heaven, mother, he shall pay, and pay indeed!"

"Who?" replied Rosa. "King Charles VIII has done it, by the hands of his faithful allies, the Swiss. It was well known that Melchior was away, and that I was living alone with a few wretched servants; so they came and broke in the doors, as though they were taking Rome by storm, and while Cardinal Valentino was making holiday with their master, they pillaged his mother's house, loading her with insults and outrages which no Turks or Saracens could possibly have improved upon."

"Very good, very good, mother," said Cæsar; "be calm; blood shall wash out disgrace. Consider a moment; what we have lost is nothing compared with what we might lose; and my father and I, you may be quite sure, will give you back more than they have stolen from you."

"I ask for no promises," cried Rosa; "I ask for revenge."

"My mother," said the cardinal, "you shall be avenged, or I will lose the name of son."

Having by these words reassured his mother, he took her to Lucrezia's palace, which in consequence of her marriage with Pesaro was unoccupied, and himself returned to the Vatican, giving orders that his mother's house should be refurnished more magnificently than before the disaster. These orders were punctually executed, and it was among her new luxurious surroundings, but with the same hatred in her heart, that Cæsar on this occasion found his mother. This feeling prompted her cry of joy when she saw him once more.

The mother and son exchanged a very few words; then Cæsar, mounting on horseback, went to the Vatican, whence as a hostage he had departed two days before. Alexander, who knew of the flight beforehand, and not only approved, but as sovereign pontiff had previously absolved his son of the perjury he was about to commit, received him joyfully, but all the same advised him to lie concealed, as Charles in all probability would not be slow to reclaim his hostage.

Indeed, the next day, when the king got up, the absence of Cardinal Valentino was observed, and as Charles was uneasy at not seeing him, he sent to inquire what had prevented his

appearance. When the messenger arrived at the house that Cæsar had left the evening before, he learned that he had gone out at nine o'clock in the evening and not returned since. He went back with this news to the king, who at once suspected that he had fled, and in the first flush of his anger let the whole army know of his perjury. The soldiers then remembered the twenty waggons, so heavily laden, from one of which the cardinal, in the sight of all, had produced such magnificent gold and silver plate; and never doubting that the cargo of the others was equally precious, they fetched them down and broke them to pieces; but inside they found nothing but stones and sand, which proved to the king that the flight had been planned a long time back, and incensed him doubly against the pope. So without loss of time he despatched to Rome Philippe de Bresse, afterwards Duke of Savoy, with orders to intimate to the Holy Father his displeasure at this conduct. But the pope replied that he knew nothing whatever about his son's flight, and expressed the sincerest regret to His Majesty, declaring that he knew nothing of his whereabouts, but was certain he was not in Rome. As a fact, the pope was speaking the truth this time, for Cæsar had gone with Cardinal Orsino to one of his estates, and was temporarily in hiding there. This reply was conveyed to Charles by two messengers from the pope, the Bishops of Nepi and of Sutri, and the people also sent an ambassador in their own behalf. He was Monsignore Porcari, dean of the *rota*, who was charged to communicate to the king the displeasure of the Romans when they learned of the cardinal's breach of faith. Little as Charles was disposed to content himself with empty words, he had to turn his attention to more serious affairs; so he continued his march to Naples without stopping, arriving there on Sunday, the 22nd of February 1495.

Four days later, the unlucky D'jem, who had fallen sick at Capua, died at Castel Nuovo. When he was leaving, at the farewell banquet, Alexander had tried on his guest the poison he intended to use so often later on upon his cardinals, and whose effects he was destined to feel himself,—such is

poetical justice. In this way the pope had secured a double haul; for, in his twofold speculation in this wretched young man, he had sold him alive to Charles for 120,000 livres, and sold him dead to Bajazet for 300,000 ducats.

But there was a certain delay about the second payment; for the Turkish emperor, as we remember, was not bound to pay the price of fratricide till he received the corpse, and by Charles's order the corpse had been buried at Gaeta.

When Cæsar Borgia learned the news, he rightly supposed that the king would be so busy settling himself in his new capital that he would have too much to think of to be worrying about him; so he went to Rome again, and, anxious to keep his promise to his mother, he signalised his return by a terrible vengeance.

Cardinal Valentino had in his service a certain Spaniard whom he had made the chief of his bravoes; he was a man of five-and-thirty or forty, whose whole life had been one long rebellion against society's laws; he recoiled from no action, provided only he could get his price. This Don Michele Correglia, who earned his celebrity for bloody deeds under the name of Michelotto, was just the man Cæsar wanted; and whereas Michelotto felt an unbounded admiration for Cæsar, Cæsar had unlimited confidence in Michelotto. It was to him the cardinal entrusted the execution of one part of his vengeance; the other he kept for himself.

Don Michele received orders to scour the Campagna and cut every French throat he could find. He began his work at once; and very few days elapsed before he had obtained most satisfactory results: more than a hundred persons were robbed or assassinated, and among the last the son of Cardinal de St. Malo, who was on his way back to France, and on whom Michelotto found a sum of 3000 crowns. For himself, Cæsar reserved the Swiss; for it was the Swiss in particular who had despoiled his mother's house. The pope had in his service about a hundred and fifty soldiers belonging to their nation, who had settled their families in Rome, and had grown rich partly by their pay and partly in the exercise of

various industries. The cardinal had every one of them dismissed, with orders to quit Rome within twenty-four hours and the Roman territories within three days. The poor wretches had all collected together to obey the order, with their wives and children and baggage, on the Piazza of St. Peter, when suddenly, by Cardinal Valentino's orders, they were hemmed in on all sides by two thousand Spaniards, who began to fire on them with their guns and charge them with their sabres, while Cæsar and his mother looked down upon the carnage from a window. In this way they killed fifty or perhaps sixty; but the rest coming up, made a charge at the assassins, and then, without suffering any loss, manged to beat a retreat to a house, where they stood a siege, and made so valiant a defence that they gave the pope time—he knew nothing of the author of this butchery—to send the captain of his guard to the rescue, who, with a strong detachment, succeeded in getting nearly forty of them safely out of the town: the rest had been massacred on the piazza or killed in the house.

But this was no real and adequate revenge; for it did not touch Charles himself, the sole author of all the troubles that the pope and his family had experienced during the last year. So Cæsar soon abandoned vulgar schemes of this kind and busied himself with loftier concerns, bending all the force of his genius to restore the league of Italian princes that had been broken by the defection of Sforza, the exile of Piero dei Medici, and the defeat of Alfonso. The enterprise was more easily accomplished than the pope could have anticipated. The Venetians were very uneasy when Charles passed so near, and they trembled lest, when he was once master of Naples, he might conceive the idea of conquering the rest of Italy. Ludovico Sforza, on his side, was beginning to tremble, seeing the rapidity with which the King of France had dethroned the house of Aragon, lest he might not make much difference between his allies and his enemies. Maximilian, for his part, was only seeking an occasion to break the temporary peace which he had granted for the sake of the concession made to him. Lastly, Ferdinand and

Isabella were allies of the dethroned house. And so it came about that all of them, for different reasons, felt a common fear, and were soon in agreement as to the necessity of driving out Charles VIII, not only from Naples, but from Italy, and pledged themselves to work together to this end, by every means in their power, by negotiations, by trickery, or by actual force. The Florentines alone refused to take part in this general levy of arms, and remained faithful to their promises.

According to the articles of the treaty agreed upon by the confederates, the alliance was to last for five-and-twenty years, and had for ostensible object the upholding of the majority of the pope, and the interests of Christendom; and these preparations might well have been taken for such as would precede a crusade against the Turks, if Bajazet's ambassador had not always been present at the deliberations, although the Christian princes could not have dared for very shame to admit the sultan by name into their league. Now the confederates had to set on foot an army of 34,000 horse and 20,000 infantry, and each of them was taxed for a contingent; thus the pope was to furnish 4000 horse, Maximilian 6000, the King of Spain, the Duke of Milan, and the republic of Venice, 8000 each. Every confederate was, in addition to this, to levy and equip 4000 infantry in the six weeks following the signature of the treaty. The fleets were to be equipped by the Maritime States; but any expenses they should incur later on were to be defrayed by all in equal shares.

The formation of this league was made public on the 12th of April 1495, Palm Sunday, and in all the Italian States, especially at Rome, was made the occasion of fêtes and immense rejoicings. Almost as soon as the publicly known articles were announced the secret ones were put into execution. These obliged Ferdinand and Isabella to send a fleet of sixty galleys to Ischia, where Alfonso's son had retired, with six hundred horsemen on board and five thousand infantry, to help him to ascend the throne once more. Those troops were to be put under the command of Gonzalvo of Cordova, who had gained the reputation of the greatest general

in Europe after the taking of Grenada. The Venetians, with a fleet of forty galleys under the command of Antonio Grimani, were to attack all the French stations on the coast of Calabria and Naples. The Duke of Milan promised for his part to check all reinforcements as they should arrive from France, and to drive the Duke of Orleans out of Asti.

Lastly, there was Maximilian, who had promised to make invasions on the frontiers, and Bajazet, who was to help with money, ships, and soldiers either the Venetians or the Spaniards, according as he might be appealed to by Barberigo or by Ferdinand the Catholic.

This league was all the more disconcerting for Charles, because of the speedy abatement of the enthusiasm that had hailed his first appearance. What had happened to him was what generally happens to a conqueror who has more good luck than talent; instead of making himself a party among the great Neapolitan and Calabrian vassals, whose roots would be embedded in the very soil, by confirming their privileges and augmenting their power, he had wounded their feelings by bestowing all the titles, offices, and fiefs on those alone who had followed him from France, so that all the important positions in the kingdom were filled by strangers.

The result was that just when the league was made known, Tropea and Amantea, which had been presented by Charles to the Seigneur de Précy, rose in revolt and hoisted the banner of Aragon; and the Spanish fleet had only to present itself at Reggio, in Calabria, for the town to throw open its gates, being more discontented with the new rule than the old; and Don Federigo, Alfonso's brother and Ferdinand's uncle, who had hitherto never quitted Brindisi, had only to appear at Tarentum to be received there as a liberator.

CHAPTER VI

CHARLES learned all this news at Naples, and, tired of his late conquests, which necessitated a labour in organisation for which he was quite unfitted, turned his eyes towards France, where victorious fêtes and rejoicings were awaiting the victor's return. So he yielded at the first breath of his advisers, and retraced his road to his kingdom, threatened, as was said, by the Germans on the north and the Spaniards on the south. Consequently, he appointed Gilbert de Montpensier, of the house of Bourbon, viceroy; d'Aubigny, of the Scotch Stuart family, lieutenant in Calabria; Etienne de Vèse, commander at Gaeta; and Don Juliano, Gabriel de Montfaucon, Guillaume de Villeneuve, George de Lilly, the bailiff of Vitry, and Graziano Guerra respectively governors of Sant' Angelo, Manfredonia, Trani, Catanzaro, Aquila, and Sulmone; then leaving behind in evidence of his claims the half of his Swiss, a party of his Gascons, eight hundred French lances, and about five hundred Italian men-at-arms, the last under the command of the prefect of Rome, Prospero and Fabrizio Colonna, and Antonio Savelli, he left Naples on the 20th of May at two o'clock in the afternoon, to traverse the whole of the Italian peninsula with the rest of his army, consisting of eight hundred French lances, two hundred gentlemen of his guard, one hundred Italian men-at-arms, three thousand Swiss infantry, one thousand French, and one thousand Gascon. He also expected to be joined by Camillo Vitelli and his brothers in Tuscany, who were to contribute two hundred and fifty men-at-arms.

A week before he left Naples, Charles had sent to Rome Monseigneur de Saint-Paul, brother of Cardinal de Luxem-

bourg; and just as he was starting he despatched thither the new Archbishop of Lyons. They both were commissioned to assure Alexander that the King of France had the most sincere desire and the very best intention of remaining his friend. In truth, Charles wished for nothing so much as to separate the pope from the league, so as to secure him as a spiritual and temporal support; but a young king, full of fire, ambition, and courage, was not the neighbour to suit Alexander; so the latter would listen to nothing, and as the troops he had demanded from the doge and Ludovico Sforza had not been sent in sufficient number for the defence of Rome, he was content with provisioning the castle of S. Angelo, putting in a formidable garrison, and leaving Cardinal Sant' Anastasio to receive Charles VIII, while he himself withdrew with Cæsar to Orvieto. Charles only stayed in Rome three days, utterly depressed because the pope had refused to receive him in spite of his entreaties. And in these three days, instead of listening to Giuliano della Rovere, who was advising him once more to call a council and depose the pope, he rather hoped to bring the pope round to his side by the virtuous act of restoring the citadels of Terracina and Cività Vecchia to the authorities of the Romagna, only keeping for himself Ostia, which he had promised Giuliano to give back to him. At last, when the three days had elapsed, he left Rome, and resumed his march in three columns towards Tuscany, crossed the States of the Church, and on the 13th reached Siena, where he was joined by Philippe de Commines, who had gone as ambassador extraordinary to the Venetian Republic, and now announced that the enemy had forty thousand men under arms and were preparing for battle. This news produced no other effect on the king and the gentlemen of his army than to excite their amusement beyond measure; for they had conceived such a contempt for their enemy by their easy conquest, that they could not believe that any army, however numerous, would venture to oppose their passage.

Charles, however, was forced to give way in the face of facts,

when he heard at San Teranza that his vanguard, commanded by Maréchal de Gié, and composed of six hundred lances and fifteen hundred Swiss, when it arrived at Fornovo had come face to face with the confederates, who had encamped at Guiarole. The maréchal had ordered an instant halt, and he too had pitched his tents, utilising for his defence the natural advantages of the hilly ground. When these first measures had been taken, he sent out, first, a herald to the enemy's camp to ask from Francesco di Gonzaga, Marquis of Mantua, generalissimo of the confederate troops, a passage for his king's army and provisions at a reasonable price; and secondly, he despatched a courier to Charles VIII, pressing him to hurry on his march with the artillery and rearguard. The confederates had given an evasive answer, for they were pondering whether they ought to jeopardise the whole Italian force in a single combat, and, putting all to the hazard, attempt to annihilate the King of France and his army together, so overwhelming the conqueror in the ruins of his ambition. The messenger found Charles busy superintending the passage of the last of his cannon over the mountain of Pontremoli. This was no easy matter, seeing that there was no sort of track, and the guns had to be lifted up and lowered by main force, and each piece needed the arms of as many as two hundred men. At last, when all the artillery had arrived without accident on the other side of the Apennines, Charles started in hot haste for Fornovo, where he arrived with all his following on the morning of the next day.

From the top of the mountain where the Maréchal de Gié had pitched his tents, the king beheld both his own camp and the enemy's. Both were on the right bank of the Taro, and were at either end of a semicircular chain of hills resembling an amphitheatre; and the space between the two camps, a vast basin filled during the winter floods by the torrent which now only marked its boundary, was nothing but a plain covered with gravel, where all manœuvres must be equally difficult for horse and infantry. Besides, on the western slope of the hills there was a little wood which extended from the enemy's army

to the French, and was in the possession of the Stradiotes, who, by help of its cover, had already engaged in several skirmishes with the French troops during the two days of halt while they were waiting for the king.

The situation was not reassuring. From the top of the mountain which overlooked Fornovo, one could get a view, as we said before, of the two camps, and could easily calculate the numerical difference between them. The French army, weakened by the establishment of garrisons in the various towns and fortresses they had won in Italy, were scarcely eight thousand strong, while the combined forces of Milan and Venice exceeded a total of thirty-five thousand. So Charles decided to try once more the methods of conciliation, and sent Commines, who, as we know, had joined him in Tuscany, to the Venetian *provveditori*, whose acquaintaince he had made when on his embassy; he having made a great impression on these men, thanks to a general high opinion of his merits. He was commissioned to tell the enemy's generals, in the name of the King of France, that his master only desired to continue his road without doing or receiving any harm; that therefore he asked to be allowed a free passage across the fair plains of Lombardy, which he could see from the heights where he now stood, stretching as far as the eye could reach, away to the foot of the Alps. Commines found the confederate army deep in discussion: the wish of the Milanese and Venetian party being to let the king go by, and not attack him; they said they were only too happy that he should leave Italy in this way, without causing any further harm; but the ambassadors of Spain and Germany took quite another view. As their masters had no troops in the army, and as all the money they had promised was already paid, they must be the gainer in either case from a battle, whichever way it went: if they won the day they would gather the fruits of victory, and if they lost they would experience nothing of the evils of defeat. This want of unanimity was the reason why the answer to Commines was deferred until the following day, and why it was settled that on the next day he should hold another

conference with a plenipotentiary to be appointed in the course of that night. The place of this conference was to be between the two armies.

The king passed the night in great uneasiness. All day the weather had threatened to turn to rain, and we have already said how rapidly the Taro could swell; the river, fordable to-day, might from to-morrow onwards prove an insurmountable obstacle; and possibly the delay had only been asked for with a view to putting the French army in a worse position. As a fact the night had scarcely come when a terrible storm arose, and so long as darkness lasted, great rumblings were heard in the Apennines, and the sky was brilliant with lightning. At break of day, however, it seemed to be getting a little calmer, though the Taro, only a streamlet the day before, had become a torrent by this time, and was rapidly rising. So at six in the morning, the king, ready armed and on horseback, summoned Commines and bade him make his way to the rendezvous that the Venetian *provveditori* had assigned. But scarcely had he contrived to give the order when loud cries were heard coming from the extreme right of the French army. The Stradiotes, under cover of the wood stretching between the two camps, had surprised an outpost, and first cutting the soldiers' throats, were carrying off their heads in their usual way at the saddle-bow. A detachment of cavalry was sent in pursuit; but, like wild animals, they had retreated to their lair in the woods, and there disappeared.

This unexpected engagement, in all probability arranged beforehand by the Spanish and German envoys, produced on the whole army the effect of a spark applied to a train of gunpowder. Commines and the Venetian *provveditori* each tried in vain to arrest the combat on either side. Light troops, eager for a skirmish, and, in the usual fashion of those days, prompted only by that personal courage which led them on to danger, had already come to blows, rushing down into the plain as though it were an amphitheatre where they might make a fine display of arms. For a moment the young king, drawn on by example, was on the point of

forgetting the responsibility of a general in his zeal as a soldier; but this first impulse was checked by Maréchal de Gié, Messire Claude de la Châtre de Guise, and M. de la Trimouille, who persuaded Charles to adopt the wiser plan, and to cross the Taro without seeking a battle, at the same time without trying to avoid it, should the enemy cross the river from their camp and attempt to block his passage. The king accordingly, following the advice of his wisest and bravest captains, thus arranged his divisions.

The first comprised the van and a body of troops whose duty it was to support them. The van consisted of three hundred and fifty men-at-arms, the best and bravest of the army, under the command of Maréchal de Gié and Jacques Trivulce; the corps following them consisted of three thousand Swiss, under the command of Engelbert de Cleves and de Lornay, the queen's grand equerry; next came three hundred archers of the guard, whom the king had sent to help the cavalry by fighting in the spaces between them.

The second division, commanded by the king in person and forming the middle of the army, was composed of the artillery, under Jean de Lagrange, a hundred gentlemen of the guard with Gilles Carrone for standard-bearer, pensioners of the king's household under Aymar de Prie, some Scots, and two hundred crossbowmen on horseback, with French archers besides, led by M. de Crussol.

Lastly, the third division, *i.e.* the rear, preceded by six thousand beasts of burden bearing the baggage, was composed of only three hundred men-at-arms, commanded by de Guise and by de la Trimouille: this was the weakest part of the army.

When this arrangement was settled, Charles ordered the van to cross the river, just at the little town of Fornovo. This was done at once, the riders getting wet up to their knees, and the footmen holding to the horses' tails. As soon as he saw the last soldiers of his first division on the opposite bank, he started himself to follow the same road and cross at the same ford, giving orders to de Guise and de la Trimouille to regulate the march of the rear guard by that of the centre, just as he had

regulated their march by that of the van. His orders were punctually carried out; and about ten o'clock in the morning the whole French army was on the left bank of the Taro: at the same time, when it seemed certain from the enemy's arrangements that battle was imminent, the baggage, led by the captain, Odet de Reberac, was separated from the rear guard, and retired to the extreme left.

Now, Francisco de Gonzaga, general-in-chief of the confederate troops, had modelled his plans on those of the King of France; by his orders, Count de Cajazzo, with four hundred men-at-arms and two thousand infantry, had crossed the Taro where the Venetian camp lay, and was to attack the French van; while Gonzaga himself, following the right bank as far as Fornovo, would go over the river by the same ford that Charles had used, with a view to attacking his rear. Lastly, he had placed the Stradiotes between these two fords, with orders to cross the river in their turn, so soon as they saw the French army attacked both in van and in the rear, and to fall upon its flank. Not content with offensive measures, Gonzaga had also made provision for retreat by leaving three reserve corps on the right bank, one to guard the camp under the instruction of the Venetian *provveditori*, and the other two arranged in echelon to support each other, the first commanded by Antonio di Montefeltro, the second by Annibale Bentivoglio.

Charles had observed all these arrangements, and had recognised the cunning Italian strategy which made his opponents the finest generals in the world; but as there was no means of avoiding the danger, he had decided to take a sideway course, and had given orders to continue the march; but in a minute the French army was caught between Count di Cajazzo, barring the way with his four hundred men-at-arms and his two thousand infantry, and Gonzaga in pursuit of the rear, as we said before, leading six hundred men-at-arms, the flower of his army, a squadron of Stradiotes, and more than five thousand infantry: this division alone was stronger than the whole of the French army.

When, however, M. de Guise and M. de la Trimouille found

themselves pressed in this way, they ordered their two hundred men-at-arms to turn right about face, while at the opposite end—that is, at the head of the army—Maréchal de Gié and Trivulce ordered a halt and lances in rest. Meanwhile, according to custom, the king, who, as we said, was in the centre, was conferring knighthood on those gentlemen who had earned the favour either by virtue of their personal powers or the king's special friendship.

Suddenly there was heard a terrible clash behind: it was the French rearguard coming to blows with the Marquis of Mantua. In this encounter, where each man had singled out his own foe as though it were a tournament, very many lances were broken, especially those of the Italian knights; for their lances were hollowed so as to be less heavy, and in consequence had less solidity. Those who were thus disarmed at once seized their swords. As they were far more numerous than the French, the king saw them suddenly outflanking his right wing and apparently prepared to surround it; at the same moment loud cries were heard from a direction facing the centre: this meant that the Stradiotes were crossing the river to make their attack.

The king at once ordered his division into two detachments, and giving one to Bourbon the bastard, to make head against the Stradiotes, he hurried with the second to the rescue of the van, flinging himself into the very midst of the mêlée, striking out like a king, and doing as steady work as the lowest in rank of his captains. Aided by the reinforcement, the rearguard made a good stand, though the enemy were five against one, and the combat in this part continued to rage with wonderful fury.

Obeying his orders, Bourbon had thrown himself upon the Stradiotes; but unfortunately, carried off by his horse, he had penetrated so far into the enemy's ranks that he was lost to sight: the disappearance of their chief, the strange dress of their new antagonists, and the peculiar method of their fighting produced a considerable effect on those who were to attack them; and for the moment disorder was the consequence in

the centre, and the horsemen scattered instead of serrying their ranks and fighting in a body. This false move would have done them serious harm, had not most of the Stradiotes, seeing the baggage alone and undefended, rushed after that in hope of booty, instead of following up their advantage. A great part of the troop nevertheless stayed behind to fight, pressing on the French cavalry and smashing their lances with their fearful scimitars. Happily the king, who had just repulsed the Marquis of Mantua's attack, perceived what was going on behind him, and riding back at all possible speed to the succour of the centre, together with the gentlemen of his household fell upon the Stradiotes, no longer armed with a lance, for that he had just broken, but brandishing his long sword, which blazed about him like lightning, and—either because he was whirled away like Bourbon by his own horse, or because he had allowed his courage to take him too far—he suddenly found himself in the thickest ranks of the Stradiotes, accompanied only by eight of the knights he had just now created, one equerry called Antoine des Ambus, and his standard-bearer. "France, France!" he cried aloud, to rally round him all the others who had scattered; they, seeing at last that the danger was less than they had supposed, began to take their revenge and to pay back with interest the blows they had received from the Stradiotes. Things were going still better for the van, which the Marquis de Cajazzo was to attack; for although he had at first appeared to be animated with a terrible purpose, he stopped short about ten or twelve feet from the French line and turned right about face without breaking a single lance. The French wanted to pursue, but the Maréchal de Gié, fearing that this flight might be only a trick to draw off the vanguard from the centre, ordered every man to stay in his place. But the Swiss, who were German, and did not understand the order, or thought it was not meant for them, followed upon their heels, and although on foot caught them up and killed a hundred of them. This was quite enough to throw them into disorder, so that some were scattered about the plain, and others made a rush for the water, so as to cross the river and rejoin their camp. When

the Maréchal de Gié saw this, he detached a hundred of his own men to go to the aid of the king, who was continuing to fight with unheard-of courage and running the greatest risks, constantly separated as he was from his gentlemen, who could not follow him; for wherever there was danger, thither he rushed, with his cry of "France," little troubling himself as to whether he was followed or not. And it was no longer with his sword that he fought; that he had long ago broken, like his lance, but with a heavy battle-axe, whose every blow was mortal whether cut or pierced. Thus the Stradiotes, already hard pressed by the king's household and his pensioners, soon changed attack for defence and defence for flight. It was at this moment that the king was really in the greatest danger; for he had let himself be carried away in pursuit of the fugitives, and presently found himself all alone, surrounded by these men, who, had they not been struck with a mighty terror, would have had nothing to do but unite and crush him and his horse together; but, as Commines remarks, "He whom God guards is well guarded, and God was guarding the King of France."

All the same, at this moment the French were sorely pressed in the rear; and although de Guise and de la Trimouille held out as firmly as it was possible to hold, they would probably have been compelled to yield to superior numbers had not a double aid arrived in time: first the indefatigable Charles, who, having nothing more to do among the fugitives, once again dashed into the midst of the fight, next the servants of the army, who, now that they were set free from the Stradiotes and saw their enemies put to flight, ran up armed with the axes they habitually used to cut down wood for building their huts: they burst into the middle of the fray, slashing at the horses' legs and dealing heavy blows that smashed in the visors of the dismounted horsemen.

The Italians could not hold out against this double attack; the *furia francese* rendered all their strategy and all their calculations useless, especially as for more than a century they had abandoned their fights of blood and fury for a kind of tournament they chose to regard as warfare; so, in spite of all Gonzaga's

efforts, they turned their backs upon the French rear and took to flight; in the greatest haste and with much difficulty they recrossed the torrent, which was swollen even more now by the rain that had been falling during the whole time of the battle.

Some thought fit to pursue the vanquished, for there was now such disorder in their ranks that they were fleeing in all directions from the battlefield where the French had gained so glorious a victory, blocking up the roads to Parma and Bercetto. But Maréchal de Gié and de Guise and de la Trimouille, who had done quite enough to save them from the suspicion of quailing before imaginary dangers, put a stop to this enthusiasm, by pointing out that it would only be risking the loss of their present advantage if they tried to push it farther with men and horses so worn out. This view was adopted in spite of the opinion of Trivulce, Camillo Vitelli, and Francesco Secco, who were all eager to follow up the victory.

The king retired to a little village on the left bank of the Taro, and took shelter in a poor house. There he disarmed, being perhaps among all the captains and all the soldiers the man who had fought best.

During the night the torrent swelled so high that the Italian army could not have pursued, even if they had laid aside their fears. The king did not propose to give the appearance of flight after a victory, and therefore kept his army drawn up all day, and at night went on to sleep at Medesano, a little village only a mile lower down than the hamlet where he rested after the fight. But in the course of the night he reflected that he had done enough for the honour of his arms in fighting an army four times as great as his own and killing three thousand men, and then waiting a day and a half to give them time to take their revenge; so two hours before daybreak he had the fires lighted, that the enemy might suppose he was remaining in camp; and every man mounting noiselessly, the whole French army, almost out of danger by this time, proceeded on their march to Borgo San Donnino.

While this was going on, the pope returned to Rome, where news highly favourable to his schemes was not slow to reach

his ears. He learned that Ferdinand had crossed from Sicily into Calabria with six thousand volunteers and a considerable number of Spanish horse and foot, led, at the command of Ferdinand and Isabella, by the famous Gonzalva de Cordova, who arrived in Italy with a great reputation, destined to suffer somewhat from the defeat at Seminara. At almost the same time the French fleet had been beaten by the Aragonese; moreover, the battle of the Taro, though a complete defeat for the confederates, was another victory for the pope, because its result was to open a return to France for that man whom he regarded as his deadliest foe. So, feeling that he had nothing more to fear from Charles, he sent him a brief at Turin, where he had stopped for a short time to give aid to Novara, therein commanding him, by virtue of his pontifical authority, to depart out of Italy with his army, and to recall within ten days those of his troops that still remained in the kingdom of Naples, on pain of excommunication and a summons to appear before him in person.

Charles VIII replied—

(1) That he did not understand how the pope, the chief of the league, ordered him to leave Italy, whereas the confederates had not only refused him a passage, but had even attempted, though unsuccessfully, as perhaps His Holiness knew, to cut off his return into France;

(2) That, as to recalling his troops from Naples, he was not so irreligious as to do that, since they had not entered the kingdom without the consent and blessing of His Holiness;

(3) That he was exceedingly surprised that the pope should require his presence in person at the capital of the Christian world just at the present time, when six weeks previously, at the time of his return from Naples, although he ardently desired an interview with His Holiness, that he might offer proofs of his respect and obedience, His Holiness, instead of according this favour, had quitted Rome so hastily on his approach that he had not been able to come up with him by any efforts whatsoever. On this point, however, he promised to give His Holiness the satisfaction he desired, if he would

engage this time to wait for him: he would therefore return to Rome so soon as the affairs that brought him back to his own kingdom had been satisfactorily settled.

Although in this reply there was a touch of mockery and defiance, Charles was none the less compelled by the circumstances of the case to obey the pope's strange brief. His presence was so much needed in France, that, in spite of the arrival of a Swiss reinforcement, he was compelled to conclude a peace with Ludovico Sforza, whereby he yielded Novara to him; while Gilbert de Montpensier and d'Aubigny, after defending, inch by inch, Calabria, the Basilicate, and Naples, were obliged to sign the capitulation of Atella, after a siege of thirty-two days, on the 20th of July 1496. This involved giving back to Ferdinand II, King of Naples, all the places and fortresses of his kingdom; which indeed he did but enjoy for three months, dying of exhaustion on the 7th of September following, at the Castello della Somma, at the foot of Vesuvius; all the attentions lavished upon him by his young wife could not repair the evil that her beauty had wrought.

His uncle Frederic succeeded; and so, in the three years of his papacy, Alexander VI had seen five kings upon the throne of Naples, while he was establishing himself more firmly upon his own pontifical seat—Ferdinand I, Alfonso I, Charles VIII, Ferdinand II, and Frederic. All this agitation about his throne, this rapid succession of sovereigns, was the best thing possible for Alexander; for each new monarch became actually king only on condition of his receiving the pontifical investiture. The consequence was that Alexander was the only gainer in power and credit by these changes; for the Duke of Milan and the republics of Florence and Venice had successively recognised him as supreme head of the Church, in spite of his simony; moreover, the five kings of Naples had in turn paid him homage. So he thought the time had now come for founding a mighty family; and for this he relied upon the Duke of Gandia, who was to hold all the highest temporal dignities; and upon Cæsar Borgia, who was to be appointed to all the great ecclesiastical offices. The pope made sure of the success of these new

projects by electing four Spanish cardinals, who brought up the number of his compatriots in the Sacred College to twenty-two, thus assuring him a constant and certain majority.

The first requirement of the pope's policy was to clear away from the neighbourhood of Rome all those petty lords whom most people call vicars of the Church, but whom Alexander called the shackles of the papacy. We saw that he had already begun this work by rousing the Orsini against the Colonna family, when Charles VIII's enterprise compelled him to concentrate all his mental resources, and also the forces of his States, so as to secure his own personal safety.

It had come about through their own imprudent action that the Orsini, the pope's old friends, were now in the pay of the French, and had entered the kingdom of Naples with them, where one of them, Virginio, a very important member of their powerful house, had been taken prisoner during the war, and was Ferdinand II's captive. Alexander could not let this opportunity escape him; so, first ordering the King of Naples not to release a man who, ever since the 1st of June 1496, had been a declared rebel, he pronounced a sentence of confiscation against Virginio Orsini and his whole family in a secret consistory, which sat on the 26th of October following—that is to say, in the early days of the reign of Frederic, whom he knew to be entirely at his command, owing to the King's great desire of getting the investiture from him; then, as it was not enough to declare the goods confiscated, without also dispossessing the owners, he made overtures to the Colonna family, saying he would commission them, in proof of their new bond of friendship, to execute the order given against their old enemies under the direction of his son Francesco, Duke of Gandia. In this fashion he contrived to weaken his neighbours each by means of the other, till such time as he could safely attack and put an end to conquered and conqueror alike.

The Colonna family accepted this proposition, and the Duke of Gandia was named General of the Church: his father in his pontifical robes bestowed on him the insignia of this office in the church of St. Peter's at Rome.

CHAPTER VII

MATTERS went forward as Alexander had wished, and before the end of the year the pontifical army had seized a great number of castles and fortresses that belonged to the Orsini, who thought themselves already lost when Charles VIII came to the rescue. They had addressed themselves to him without much hope that he could be of real use to them, with his want of armed troops and his preoccupation with his own affairs. He, however, sent Carlo Orsini, son of Virginio, the prisoner, and Vitellozzo Vitelli, brother of Camillo Vitelli, one of the three valiant Italian condottieri who had joined him and fought for him at the crossing of the Taro. These two captains, whose courage and skill were well known, brought with them a considerable sum of money from the liberal coffers of Charles VIII. Now, scarcely had they arrived at Città di Castello, the centre of their little sovereignty, and expressed their intention of raising a band of soldiers, when men presented themselves from all sides to fight under their banner; so they very soon assembled a small army, and as they had been able during their stay among the French to study those matters of military organisation in which France excelled, they now applied the result of their learning to their own troops: the improvements were mainly certain changes in the artillery which made their manœuvres easier, and the substitution for their ordinary weapons of pikes similar in form to the Swiss pikes, but two feet longer. These changes effected, Vitellozzo Vitelli spent three or four months in exercising his men in the management of their new weapons; then, when he thought them fit to make good use of these, and when he had collected more or less help from the towns of Perugia, Todi,

and Narni, where the inhabitants trembled lest their turn should come after the Orsini's, as the Orsini's had followed on the Colonnas', he marched towards Bracciano, which was being besieged by the Duke of Urbino, who had been lent to the pope by the Venetians, in virtue of the treaty quoted above.

The Venetian general, when he heard of Vitelli's approach, thought he might as well spare him half his journey, and marched out to confront him: the two armies met in the Soriano road, and the battle straightway began. The pontifical army had a body of eight hundred Germans, on which the Dukes of Urbino and Gandia chiefly relied, as well they might, for they were the best troops in the world; but Vitelli attacked these picked men with his infantry, who, armed with their formidable pikes, ran them through, while they with arms four feet shorter had no chance even of returning the blows they received; at the same time Vitelli's light troops wheeled upon the flank, following their most rapid movements, and silencing the enemy's artillery by the swiftness and accuracy of their attack. The pontifical troops were put to flight, though after a longer resistance than might have been expected when they had to sustain the attack of an army so much better equipped than their own; with them they bore to Ronciglione the Duke of Gandia, wounded in the face by a pike-thrust, Fabrizio Colonna, and the envoy; the Duke of Urbino, who was fighting in the rear to aid the retreat, was taken prisoner with all his artillery and the baggage of the conquered army. But this success, great as it was, did not so swell the pride of Vitellozzo Vitelli as to make him oblivious of his position. He knew that he and the Orsini together were too weak to sustain a war of such magnitude; that the little store of money to which he owed the existence of his army would very soon be expended and his army would disappear with it. So he hastened to get pardoned for the victory by making propositions which he would very likely have refused had he been the vanquished party; and the pope accepted his conditions without demur; during the interval having heard that Trivulce had just recrossed the Alps and re-entered Italy with three thousand

Swiss, and fearing lest the Italian general might only be the advance guard of the King of France. So it was settled that the Orsini should pay 70,000 florins for the expenses of the war, and that all the prisoners on both sides should be exchanged without ransom with the single exception of the Duke of Urbino. As a pledge for the future payment of the 70,000 florins, the Orsini handed over to the Cardinals Sforza and San Severino the fortresses of Anguillara and Cervetri; then, when the day came and they had not the necessary money, they gave up their prisoner, the Duke of Urbino, estimating his worth at 40,000 ducats—nearly all the sum required—and handed him over to Alexander on account; he, a rigid observer of engagements, made his own general, taken prisoner in his service, pay to himself the ransom he owed to the enemy.

Then the pope had the corpse of Virginio sent to Carlo Orsini and Vitellozzo Vitelli, as he could not send him alive. By a strange fatality the prisoner had died, eight days before the treaty was signed, of the same malady—at least, if we may judge by analogy—that had carried off Bajazet's brother.

As soon as the peace was signed, Prospero Colonna and Gonzalvo de Cordova, whom the pope had demanded from Frederic, arrived at Rome with an army of Spanish and Neapolitan troops. Alexander, as he could not utilise these against the Orsini, set them the work of recapturing Ostia, not desiring to incur the reproach of bringing them to Rome for nothing. Gonzalvo was rewarded for this feat by receiving the Rose of Gold from the pope's hand—that being the highest honour His Holiness can grant. He shared this distinction with the Emperor Maximilian, the King of France, the Doge of Venice, and the Marquis of Mantua.

In the midst of all this occurred the solemn festival of the Assumption, in which Gonzalvo was invited to take part. He accordingly left his palace, proceeded in great pomp in the front of the pontifical cavalry, and took his place on the Duke of Gandia's left hand. The duke attracted all eyes by his personal beauty, set off as it was by all the luxury he thought fit to display at this festival. He had a retinue of pages and servants,

clad in sumptuous liveries, incomparable for richness with anything heretofore seen in Rome, that city of religious pomp. All these pages and servants rode magnificent horses, caparisoned in velvet trimmed with silver fringe, and bells of silver hanging down every here and there. He himself was in a robe of gold brocade, and wore at his neck a string of Eastern pearls, perhaps the finest and largest that ever belonged to a Christian prince, while on his cap was a gold chain studded with diamonds of which the smallest was worth more than 20,000 ducats. This magnificence was all the more conspicuous by the contrast it presented to Cæsar's dress, whose scarlet robe admitted of no ornaments. The result was that Cæsar, doubly jealous of his brother, felt a new hatred rise up within him when he heard all along the way the praises of his fine appearance and noble equipment. From this moment Cardinal Valentino decided in his own mind the fate of this man, this constant obstacle in the path of his pride, his love, and his ambition. Very good reason, says Tommaso, the historian, had the Duke of Gandia to leave behind him an impression on the public mind of his beauty and his grandeur at this fête, for this last display was soon to be followed by the obsequies of the unhappy young man.

Lucrezia also had come to Rome, on the pretext of taking part in the solemnity, but really, as we shall see later, with the view of serving as a new instrument for her father's ambition. As the pope was not satisfied with an empty triumph of vanity and display for his son, and as his war with the Orsini had failed to produce the anticipated results, he decided to increase the fortune of his firstborn by doing the very thing which he had accused Calixtus in his speech of doing for him, viz. alienating from the States of the Church the cities of Benevento, Terracino, and Pontecorvo to form a duchy as an appanage to his son's house. Accordingly this proposition was put forward in a full consistory, and as the college of cardinals was entirely Alexander's, there was no difficulty about carrying his point. This new favour to his elder brother exasperated Cæsar, although he was himself getting a share of the paternal gifts; for he had just been named envoy *a latere* at Frederic's court, and was appointed

to crown him with his own hands as the papal representative. But Lucrezia, when she had spent a few days of pleasure with her father and brothers, had gone into retreat at the convent of San Sisto. No one knew the real motive of her seclusion, and no entreaties of Cæsar, whose love for her was strange and unnatural, had induced her to defer this departure from the world even until the day after he left for Naples. His sister's obstinacy wounded him deeply, for ever since the day when the Duke of Gandia had appeared in the procession so magnificently attired, he fancied he had observed a coldness in the mistress of his illicit affection, and so far did this increase his hatred of his rival that he resolved to be rid of him at all costs. So he ordered the chief of his sbirri to come and see him the same night.

Michelotto was accustomed to these mysterious messages, which almost always meant his help was wanted in some love affair or some act of revenge. As in either case his reward was generally a large one, he was careful to keep his engagement, and at the appointed hour was brought into the presence of his patron.

Cæsar received him leaning against a tall chimneypiece, no longer wearing his cardinal's robe and hat, but a doublet of black velvet slashed with satin of the same colour. One hand toyed mechanically with his gloves, while the other rested on the handle of a poisoned dagger which never left his side. This was the dress he kept for his nocturnal expeditions, so Michelotto felt no surprise at that; but his eyes burned with a flame more gloomy than their wont, and his cheeks, generally pale, were now livid. Michelotto had but to cast one look upon his master to see that Cæsar and he were about to share some terrible enterprise.

He signed to him to shut the door. Michelotto obeyed. Then, after a moment's silence, during which the eyes of Borgia seemed to burn into the soul of the bravo, who with a careless air stood bareheaded before him, he said, in a voice whose slightly mocking tone gave the only sign of his emotion—

"Michelotto, how do you think this dress suits me?"

Accustomed as he was to his master's tricks of circumlocution, the bravo was so far from expecting this question, that at first he stood mute, and only after a few moments' pause was able to say—

"Admirably, monsignore; thanks to the dress, your Excellency has the appearance as well as the true spirit of a captain."

"I am glad you think so," replied Cæsar. "And now let me ask you, do you know who is the cause that, instead of wearing this dress, which I can only put on at night, I am forced to disguise myself in the daytime in a cardinal's robe and hat, and pass my time trotting about from church to church, from consistory to consistory, when I ought properly to be leading a magnificent army in the battlefield, where you would enjoy a captain's rank, instead of being the chief of a few miserable sbirri?"

"Yes, monsignore," replied Michelotto, who had divined Cæsar's meaning at his first word; "the man who is the cause of this is Francesco, Duke of Gandia, and Benevento, your elder brother."

"Do you know," Cæsar resumed, giving no sign of assent but a nod and a bitter smile,—"do you know who has all the money and none of the genius, who has the helmet and none of the brains, who has the sword and no hand to wield it?"

"That too is the Duke of Gandia," said Michelotto.

"Do you know," continued Cæsar, "who is the man whom I find continually blocking the path of my ambition, my fortune, and my love?"

"It is the same, the Duke of Gandia," said Michelotto.

"And what do you think of it?" asked Cæsar.

"I think he must die," replied the man coldly.

"That is my opinion also, Michelotto," said Cæsar, stepping towards him and grasping his hand; "and my only regret is that I did not think of it sooner; for if I had carried a sword at my side instead of a crosier in my hand when the King of France was marching through Italy, I should now have been master of a fine domain. The pope is obviously anxious to aggrandise his family, but he is mistaken in the means he adopts: it is I who ought to have been made duke, and my

brother a cardinal. There is no doubt at all that, had he made me duke, I should have contributed a daring and courage to his service that would have made his power far weightier than it is. The man who would make his way to vast dominions and a kingdom ought to trample under foot all the obstacles in his path, and boldly grasp the very sharpest thorns, whatever reluctance his weak flesh may feel; such a man, if he would open out his path to fortune, should seize his dagger or his sword and strike out with his eyes shut; he should not shrink from bathing his hands in the blood of his kindred; he should follow the example offered him by every founder of empire from Romulus to Bajazet, both of whom climbed to the throne by the ladder of fratricide. Yes, Michelotto, as you say, such is my condition, and I am resolved I will not shrink. Now you know why I sent for you: am I wrong in counting upon you?"

As might have been expected, Michelotto, seeing his own fortune in this crime, replied that he was entirely at Cæsar's service, and that he had nothing to do but to give his orders as to time, place, and manner of execution. Cæsar replied that the time must needs be very soon, since he was on the point of leaving Rome for Naples; as to the place and the mode of execution, they would depend on circumstances, and each of them must look out for an opportunity, and seize the first that seemed favourable.

Two days after this resolution had been taken, Cæsar learned that the day of his departure was fixed for Thursday the 15th of June: at the same time he received an invitation from his mother to come to supper with her on the 14th. This was a farewell repast given in his honour. Michelotto received orders to be in readiness at eleven o'clock at night.

The table was set in the open air in a magnificent vineyard, a property of Rosa Vanozza's in the neighbourhood of San Piero-in-Vinculis: the guests were Cæsar Borgia, the hero of the occasion; the Duke of Gandia; Prince of Squillace; Doña Sancha, his wife; the Cardinal of Monte Reale, Francesco Borgia, son of Calixtus III; Don Roderigo Borgia, captain of

the apostolic palace; Don Goffredo, brother of the cardinal; Gian Borgia, at that time ambassador at Perugia; and lastly, Don Alfonso Borgia, the pope's nephew: the whole family therefore was present, except Lucrezia, who was still in retreat, and would not come.

The repast was magnificent: Cæsar was quite as cheerful as usual, and the Duke of Gandia seemed more joyous than he had ever been before.

In the middle of supper a man in a mask brought him a letter. The duke unfastened it, colouring up with pleasure; and when he had read it answered in these words, "I will come": then he quickly hid the letter in the pocket of his doublet; but quick as he was to conceal it from every eye, Cæsar had had time to cast a glance that way, and he fancied he recognised the handwriting of his sister Lucrezia. Meanwhile the messenger had gone off with his answer, no one but Cæsar paying the slightest attention to him, for at that period it was the custom for love messages to be conveyed by men in domino or by women whose faces were concealed by a veil.

At ten o'clock they rose from the table, and as the air was sweet and mild they walked about a while under the magnificent pine trees that shaded the house of Rosa Vanozza, while Cæsar never for an instant let his brother out of his sight. At eleven o'clock the Duke of Gandia bade good-night to his mother. Cæsar at once followed suit, alleging his desire to go to the Vatican to bid farewell to the pope, as he would not be able to fulfil this duty on the morrow, his departure being fixed at daybreak. This pretext was all the more plausible since the pope was in the habit of sitting up every night till two or three o'clock in the morning.

The two brothers went out together, mounted their horses, which were waiting for them at the door, and rode side by side as far as the Palazzo Borgia, the present home of Cardinal Ascanio Sforza, who had taken it as a gift from Alexander the night before his election to the papacy. There the Duke of Gandia separated from his brother, saying with a smile that he

was not intending to go home, as he had several hours to spend first with a fair lady who was expecting him. Cæsar replied that he was no doubt free to make any use he liked best of his opportunities, and wished him a very good night. The duke turned to the right, and Cæsar to the left; but Cæsar observed that the street the duke had taken led in the direction of the convent of San Sisto, where, as we said, Lucrezia was in retreat; his suspicions were confirmed by this observation, and he directed his horse's steps to the Vatican, found the pope, took his leave of him, and received his benediction.

From this moment all is wrapped in mystery and darkness, like that in which the terrible deed was done that we are now to relate.

This, however, is what is believed:—

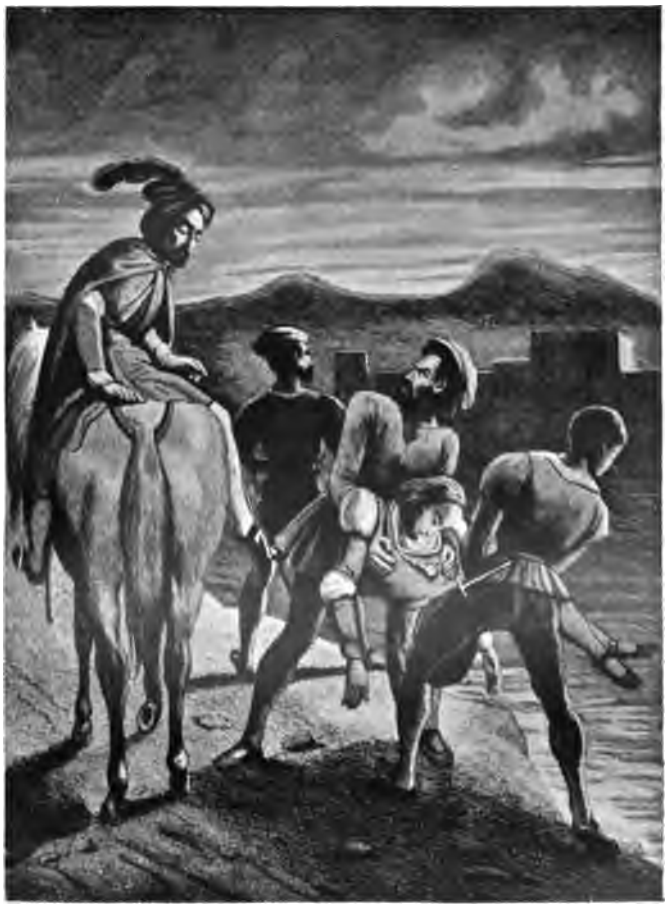
The Duke of Gandia, when he quitted Cæsar, sent away his servants, and in the company of one confidential valet alone pursued his course towards the Piazza della Giudecca. There he found the same man in a mask who had come to speak to him at supper, and forbidding his valet to follow any farther, he bade him wait on the piazza where they then stood, promising to be on his way back in two hours' time at latest, and to take him up as he passed. And at the appointed hour the duke reappeared, took leave this time of the man in the mask, and retraced his steps towards his palace. But scarcely had he turned the corner of the Jewish Ghetto, when four men on foot, led by a fifth who was on horseback, flung themselves upon him. Thinking they were thieves, or else that he was the victim of some mistake, the Duke of Gandia mentioned his name; but instead of the name checking the murderers' daggers, their strokes were redoubled, and the duke very soon fell dead, his valet dying beside him.

Then the man on horseback, who had watched the assassination with no sign of emotion, backed his horse towards the dead body: the four murderers lifted the corpse across the crupper, and walking by the side to support it, then made their way down the lane that leads to the church of Santa Maria-in-

Monticelli. The wretched valet they left for dead upon the pavement. But he, after the lapse of a few seconds, regained some small strength, and his groans were heard by the inhabitants of a poor little house hard by; they came and picked him up, and laid him upon a bed, where he died almost at once, unable to give any evidence as to the assassins or any details of the murder.

All night the duke was expected home, and all the next morning; then expectation was turned into fear, and fear at last into deadly terror. The pope was approached, and told that the Duke of Gandia had never come back to his palace since he left his mother's house. But Alexander tried to deceive himself all through the rest of the day, hoping that his son might have been surprised by the coming of daylight in the midst of an amorous adventure, and was waiting till the next night to get away in that darkness which had aided his coming thither. But the night, like the day, passed and brought no news. On the morrow, the pope, tormented by the gloomiest presentiments and by the raven's croak of the *vox populi*, let himself fall into the depths of despair: amid sighs and sobs of grief, all he could say to any who came to him was but these words, repeated a thousand times: "Search, search; let us know how my unhappy son has died."

Then everybody joined in the search; for, as we have said, the Duke of Gandia was beloved by all; but nothing could be discovered from scouring the town, except the body of the murdered man, who was recognised as the duke's valet; of his master there was no trace whatever: it was then thought, not without reason, that he had probably been thrown into the Tiber, and they began to follow along its banks, beginning from the Via della Ripetta, questioning every boatman and fisherman who might possibly have seen, either from their houses or from their boats, what had happened on the river banks during the two preceding nights. At first all inquiries were in vain; but when they had gone up as high as the Via del Fantanone, they found a man at last who said he had seen something happen on the night of the 14th which might very



Bouvdet, del'. *Henri, sculp.*

CESAR BORGIA ORDERING THE BODY OF HIS BROTHER TO BE THROWN INTO THE TIBER

possibly have some bearing on the subject of inquiry. He was a Slav named George, who was taking up the river a boat laden with wood to Ripetta. The following are his own words:—

"Gentlemen," he said, "last Wednesday evening, when I had set down my load of wood on the bank, I remained in my boat, resting in the cool night air, and watching lest other men should come and take away what I had just unloaded, when, about two o'clock in the morning, I saw coming out of the lane on the left of San Girolamo's Church two men on foot, who came forward into the middle of the street, and looked so carefully all round that they seemed to have come to find out if anybody was going along the street. When they felt sure that it was deserted, they went back along the same lane, whence issued presently two other men, who used similar precautions to make sure that there was nothing fresh; they, when they found all as they wished, gave a sign to their companions to come and join them; next appeared one man on a dapple-grey horse, which was carrying on the crupper the body of a dead man, his head and arms hanging over on one side and his feet on the other. The two fellows I had first seen exploring were holding him up by the arms and legs. The other three at once went up to the river, while the first two kept a watch on the street, and advancing to the part of the bank where the sewers of the town are discharged into the Tiber, the horseman turned his horse, backing on the river; then the two who were at either side taking the corpse, one by the hands, the other by the feet, swung it three times, and the third time threw it out into the river with all their strength; then at the noise made when the body splashed into the water, the horseman asked, 'Is it done?' and the others answered, 'Yes, sir,' and he at once turned right about face; but seeing the dead man's cloak floating, he asked what was that black thing swimming about. 'Sir,' said one of the men, 'it is his cloak'; and then another man picked up some stones, and running to the place where it was still floating, threw them so as to make it sink under; as soon as it had quite disappeared, they went off, and after walk-

ing a little way along the main road, they went into the lane that leads to San Giacomo. That was all I saw, gentlemen, and so it is all I can answer to the questions you have asked me."

At these words, which robbed of all hope any who might yet entertain it, one of the pope's servants asked the Slav why, when he was witness of such a deed, he had not gone to denounce it to the governor. But the Slav replied that, since he had exercised his present trade on the riverside, he had seen dead men thrown into the Tiber in the same way a hundred times, and had never heard that anybody had been troubled about them; so he supposed it would be the same with this corpse as the others, and had never imagined it was his duty to speak of it, not thinking it would be any more important than it had been before.

Acting on this intelligence, the servants of His Holiness summoned at once all the boatmen and fishermen who were accustomed to go up and down the river, and as a large reward was promised to anyone who should find the duke's body, there were soon more than a hundred ready for the job; so that before the evening of the same day, which was Friday, two men were drawn out of the water, of whom one was instantly recognised as the hapless duke. At the very first glance at the body there could be no doubt as to the cause of death. It was pierced with nine wounds, the chief one in the throat, whose artery was cut. The clothing had not been touched: his doublet and cloak were there, his gloves in his waistband, gold in his purse; the duke then must have been assassinated not for gain but for revenge.

The ship which carried the corpse went up the Tiber to the Castello Sant' Angelo, where it was set down. At once the magnificent dress was fetched from the duke's palace which he had worn on the day of the procession, and he was clothed in it once more: beside him were placed the insignia of the generalship of the Church. Thus he lay in state all day, but his father in his despair had not the courage to come and look at him. At last, when night had fallen, his most trusty and honoured servants carried the body to the church of the

Madonna del Popolo, with all the pomp and ceremony that Church and State combined could devise for the funeral of the son of the pope.

Meantime the bloodstained hands of Cæsar Borgia were placing a royal crown upon the head of Frederic of Aragon.

This blow had pierced Alexander's heart very deeply. As at first he did not know on whom his suspicions should fall, he gave the strictest orders for the pursuit of the murderers; but little by little the infamous truth was forced upon him. He saw that the blow which struck at his house came from that very house itself, and then his despair was changed to madness: he ran through the rooms of the Vatican like a maniac, and entering the consistory with torn garments and ashes on his head, he sobbingly avowed all the errors of his past life, owning that the disaster that struck his offspring through his offspring was a just chastisement from God; then he retired to a secret dark chamber of the palace, and there shut himself up, declaring his resolve to die of starvation. And indeed for more than sixty hours he took no nourishment by day nor rest by night, making no answer to those who knocked at his door to bring him food except with the wailings of a woman or a roar as of a wounded lion; even the beautiful Giulia Farnese, his new mistress, could not move him at all, and was obliged to go and seek Lucrezia, that daughter doubly loved, to conquer his deadly resolve. Lucrezia came out from the retreat where she was weeping for the Duke of Gandia, that she might console her father. At her voice the door did really open, and it was only then that the Duke of Segovia, who had been kneeling almost a whole day at the threshold, begging His Holiness to take heart, could enter with servants bearing wine and food.

The pope remained alone with Lucrezia for three days and nights; then he reappeared in public, outwardly calm, if not resigned; for Guicciardini assures us that his daughter had made him understand how dangerous it would be to himself to show too openly before the assassin, who was coming home, the immoderate love he felt for his victim.

CHAPTER VIII

CÆSAR remained at Naples, partly to give time to the paternal grief to cool down, and partly to get on with another business he had lately been charged with, nothing else than a proposition of marriage between Lucrezia and Don Alfonso of Aragon, Duke of Bicelli and Prince of Salerno, natural son of Alfonso II and brother of Doña Sancha. It was true that Lucrezia was already married to the lord of Pesaro, but she was the daughter of a father who had received from Heaven the right of uniting and disuniting. There was no need to trouble about so trifling a matter: when the two were ready to marry, the divorce would be effected. Alexander was too good a tactician to leave his daughter married to a son-in-law who was becoming useless to him.

Towards the end of August it was announced that the ambassador was coming back to Rome, having accomplished his mission to the new king to his great satisfaction. And thither he returned on the 5th of September,—that is, nearly three months after the Duke of Gandia's death,—and on the next day, the 6th, from the church of Santa Maria Novella, where, according to custom, the cardinals and the Spanish and Venetian ambassadors were awaiting him on horseback at the door, he proceeded to the Vatican, where His Holiness was sitting; there he entered the consistory, was admitted by the pope, and in accordance with the usual ceremonial received his benediction and kiss; then, accompanied once more in the same fashion by the ambassadors and cardinals, he was escorted to his own apartments. Thence he proceeded to the pope's, as soon as he was left alone; for at the consistory they had had no speech with one another, and the father and son

had a hundred things to talk about, but of these the Duke of Gandia was not one, as might have been expected. His name was not once spoken, and neither on that day nor afterwards was there ever again any mention of the unhappy young man: it was as though he had never existed.

It was the fact that Cæsar brought good news. King Frederic gave his consent to the proposed union; so the marriage of Sforza and Lucrezia was dissolved on a pretext of nullity. Then Frederic authorised the exhumation of D'jem's body, which, it will be remembered, was worth 300,000 ducats.

After this, all came about as Cæsar had desired; he became the man who was all-powerful after the pope; but when he was second in command it was soon evident to the Roman people that their city was making a new stride in the direction of ruin. There was nothing but balls, fêtes, masquerades; there were magnificent hunting parties, when Cæsar, who had begun to cast off his cardinal's robe,—weary perhaps of the colour,—appeared in a French dress, followed, like a king, by cardinals, envoys, and bodyguard. The whole pontifical town, given up like a courtesan to orgies and debauchery, had never been more the home of sedition, luxury, and carnage, according to the Cardinal of Viterbo, not even in the days of Nero and Heliogabalus. Never had she fallen upon days more evil; never had more traitors done her dishonour or sbirri stained her streets with blood. The number of thieves was so great, and their audacity such, that no one could with safety pass the gates of the town; soon it was not even safe within them. No house, no castle, availed for defence. Right and justice no longer existed. Money, force, pleasure, ruled supreme.

Still, the gold was melting as in a furnace at these fêtes; and, by Heaven's just punishment, Alexander and Cæsar were beginning to covet the fortunes of those very men who had risen through their simony to their present elevation. The first attempt at a new method of coining money was tried upon the Cardinal of Cosenza. The occasion was as follows. A certain dispensation had been granted some time before to a nun who had taken the vows: she was the only surviving heir to the

throne of Portugal, and by means of the dispensation she had been wedded to the natural son of the last king. This marriage was more prejudicial than can easily be imagined to the interests of Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain; so they sent ambassadors to Alexander to lodge a complaint against a proceeding of this nature, especially as it happened at the very moment when an alliance was to be formed between the house of Aragon and the Holy See. Alexander understood the complaint, and resolved that all should be set right. So he denied all knowlege of the papal brief—though he had as a fact received 60,000 ducats for signing it—and accused the Archbishop of Cosenza, secretary for apostolic briefs, of having granted a false dispensation. By reason of this accusation, the archbishop was taken to the castle of Sant' Angelo, and a suit was begun.

But as it was no easy task to prove an accusation of this nature, especially if the archbishop should persist in maintaining that the dispensation was really granted by the pope, it was resolved to employ a trick with him which could not fail to succeed. One evening the Archbishop of Cosenza saw Cardinal Valentino come into his prison; with that frank air of affability which he knew well how to assume when it could serve his purpose, he explained to the prisoner the embarrassing situation in which the pope was placed, from which the archbishop alone, whom His Holiness looked upon as his best friend, could save him.

The archbishop replied that he was entirely at the service of His Holiness.

Cæsar, on his entrance, found the captive seated, leaning his elbows on a table, and he took a seat opposite him and explained the pope's position: it was an embarrassing one. At the very time of contracting so important an alliance with the house of Aragon as that of Lucrezia and Alfonso, His Holiness could not avow to Ferdinand and Isabella that, for the sake of a few miserable ducats, he had signed a dispensation which would unite in the husband and wife together all the legitimate claims to a throne to which Ferdinand and Isabella had no

right at all but that of conquest. This avowal would necessarily put an end to all negotiations, and the pontifical house would fall by the overthrow of that very pedestal which was to have heightened its grandeur. Accordingly the archbishop would understand what the pope expected of his devotion and friendship: it was a simple and straight avowal that he had supposed he might take it upon himself to accord the dispensation. Then, as the sentence to be passed on such an error would be the business of Alexander, the accused could easily imagine beforehand how truly paternal such a sentence would be. Besides, the reward was in the same hands, and if the sentence was that of a father, the recompense would be that of a king. In fact, this recompense would be no less than the honour of assisting as envoy, with the title of cardinal, at the marriage of Lucrezia and Alfonso—a favour which would be very appropriate, since it would be thanks to his devotion that the marriage could take place.

The Archbishop of Cosenza knew the men he was dealing with; he knew that to save their own ends they would hesitate at nothing; he knew they had a poison like sugar to the taste and to the smell, impossible to discover in food—a poison that would kill slowly or quickly as the poisoner willed and would leave no trace behind; he knew the secret of the poisoned key that lay always on the pope's mantelpiece, so that when His Holiness wished to destroy some one of his intimates, he bade him open a certain cupboard: on the handle of the key there was a little spike, and as the lock of the cupboard turned stiffly the hand would naturally press, the lock would yield, and nothing would have come of it but a trifling scratch: the scratch was mortal. He knew, too, that Cæsar wore a ring made like two lions' heads, and that he would turn the stone on the inside when he was shaking hands with a friend. Then the lions' teeth became the teeth of a viper, and the friend died cursing Borgia. So he yielded, partly through fear, partly blinded by the thought of the reward; and Cæsar returned to the Vatican armed with a precious paper, in which the Archbishop of Cosenza admitted that he was the only person re-

sponsible for the dispensation granted to the royal nun. Two days later, by means of the proofs kindly furnished by the archbishop, the pope, in the presence of the governor of Rome, the auditor of the apostolic chamber, the advocate, and the fiscal attorney, pronounced sentence, condemning the archbishop to the loss of all his benefices and ecclesiastical offices, degradation from his orders, and confiscation of his goods; his person was to be handed over to the civil arm. Two days later the civil magistrate entered the prison to fulfil his office as received from the pope, and appeared before the archbishop, accompanied by a clerk, two servants, and four guards. The clerk unrolled the paper he carried and read out the sentence; the two servants untied a packet, and, stripping the prisoner of his ecclesiastical garments, they reclothed him in a dress of coarse white cloth which only reached down to his knees, breeches of the same, and a pair of clumsy shoes. Lastly, the guards took him, and led him into one of the deepest dungeons of the castle of Sant' Angelo, where for furniture he found nothing but a wooden crucifix, a table, a chair, and a bed; for occupation, a Bible and a breviary, with a lamp to read by; for nourishment, two pounds of bread and a little cask of water, which were to be renewed every three days, together with a bottle of oil for burning in his lamp.

At the end of a year the poor archbishop died of despair, not before he had gnawed his own arms in his agony.

The very same day that he was taken into the dungeon, Cæsar Borgia, who had managed the affair so ably, was presented by the pope with all the belongings of the condemned prisoner.

But the hunting parties, balls, and masquerades were not the only pleasures enjoyed by the pope and his family: from time to time strange spectacles were exhibited. We will only describe two—one of them a case of punishment, the other no more nor less than a matter of the stud farm. But as both of these give details with which we would not have our readers credit our imagination, we will first say that they are literally translated from Burchard's Latin journal.

"About the same time that is, about the beginning of 1499

a certain courtesan named La Corsetta was in prison, and had a lover who came to visit her in woman's clothes, a Spanish Moor, called from his disguise 'the Spanish lady from Barbary.' As a punishment, both of them were led through the town, the woman without petticoat or skirt, but wearing only the Moor's dress unbuttoned in front; the man wore his woman's garb; his hands were tied behind his back, and the skirt fastened up to his middle, with a view to complete exposure before the eyes of all. When in this attire they had made the circuit of the town, the Corsetta was sent back to the prison with the Moor. But on the 7th of April following, the Moor was again taken out and escorted in the company of two thieves towards the Campo dei Fiori. The three condemned men were preceded by a constable, who rode backwards on an ass, and held in his hand a long pole, on the end of which were hung, still bleeding, certain mutilated parts of a Jew's body who had thus been punished for intercourse with a Christian woman. When the procession reached the place of execution, the thieves were hanged, and the unfortunate Moor was tied to a stake piled round with wood, where he was to have been burnt to death, had not rain fallen in such torrents that the fire would not burn, in spite of all the efforts of the executioner."

This unlooked-for accident, taken as a miracle by the people, robbed Lucrezia of the most exciting part of the execution; but her father was holding in reserve another kind of spectacle to console her with later. We inform the reader once more that a few lines we are about to set before him are a translation from the journal of the worthy German Burchard, who saw nothing in the bloodiest or most wanton performances but facts for his journal, which he duly registered with the impassibility of a scribe, appending no remark or moral reflection.

"On the 11th of November a certain peasant was entering Rome with two mares laden with wood, when the servants of His Holiness, just as he passed the Piazza of St. Peter's, cut their girths, so that their loads fell on the ground with the pack-saddles, and led off the mares to a court between the palace and the gate; then the stable doors were opened, and

four stallions, quite free and unbridled, rushed out after the mares, and covered them, after much neighing, kicking, and biting, in which they got seriously hurt. The pope and Madonna Lucrezia, who sat at the window just over the palace gate, took the greatest delight in the struggle and all that followed it."

We will follow Burchard's example, and abstain from all remark.

Now Cæsar's trick in the matter of the Archbishop of Cosenza had had the desired result, and Isabella and Ferdinand could no longer impute to Alexander the signature of the brief they had complained of: so nothing was now in the way of the marriage of Lucrezia and Alfonso; this certainty gave the pope great joy, for he attached all the more importance to this marriage because he was already cogitating a second, between Cæsar and Doña Carlota, Frederic's daughter.

Cæsar had shown in all his actions since his brother's death his want of vocation for the ecclesiastical life; so no one was astonished when, a consistory having been summoned one morning by Alexander, Cæsar entered, and addressing the pope, began by saying that from his earliest years he had been drawn towards secular pursuits both by natural inclination and ability, and it had only been in obedience to the absolute commands of His Holiness that he had entered the Church, accepted the cardinal's scarlet, other dignities, and finally the sacred order of the diaconate; but feeling that in his situation it was improper to follow his passions, and at his age impossible to resist them, he humbly entreated His Holiness graciously to yield to the desire he had failed to overcome, and to permit him to lay aside the dress and dignities of the Church, and enter once more into the world, there to contract a lawful marriage; also he entreated the lord cardinals to intercede for him with His Holiness, to whom he would freely resign all his churches, abbeys, and benefices, as well as every other ecclesiastical dignity and preferment that had been accorded him. The cardinals, deferring to Cæsar's wishes, gave a unanimous vote, and the pope, as we may suppose, like a good father, not wishing to force his son's inclinations, accepted his resignation, and yielded to the petition;

thus Cæsar put off the scarlet robe, which was suited to him, says his historian, Tommaso Tommasi, in one particular only —that it was the colour of blood.

In truth, the resignation was a pressing necessity, and there was no time to lose. Charles VIII one day after he had come home late and tired from the hunting-field, had bathed his head in cold water, and going straight to table, had been struck down by an apoplectic seizure directly after his supper, and was dead, leaving the throne to the good Louis XII, a man of two conspicuous weaknesses, one as deplorable as the other: the first was the wish to make conquests; the second was the desire to have children. Alexander, who was on the watch for all political changes, had seen in a moment what he could get from Louis XII's accession to the throne, and was prepared to profit by the fact that the new king of France needed his help for the accomplishment of his twofold desire. Louis needed, first, his temporal aid in an expedition against the duchy of Milan, on which, as we explained before, he had inherited claims from Valentina Visconti, his grandmother; and, secondly, his spiritual aid to dissolve his marriage with Jeanne, the daughter of Louis XI, a childless and hideously deformed woman, whom he had only married by reason of the great fear he entertained for her father. Now Alexander was willing to do all this for Louis XII and to give in addition a cardinal's hat to his friend George d'Amboise, provided only that the King of France would use his influence in persuading the young Doña Carlota, who was at his court, to marry his son Cæsar.

So, as this business was already far advanced on the day when Cæsar doffed his scarlet and donned a secular garb, thus fulfilling the ambition so long cherished, when the lord of Villeneuve, sent by Louis and commissioned to bring Cæsar to France, presented himself before the ex-cardinal on his arrival at Rome, the latter, with his usual extravagance of luxury and the kindness he knew well how to bestow on those he needed, entertained his guest for a month, and did all the honours of Rome. After that, they departed, preceded by one of the pope's couriers, who gave orders that every town they passed through was to

receive them with marks of honour and respect. The same order had been sent throughout the whole of France, where the illustrious visitors received so numerous a guard, and were welcomed by a populace so eager to behold them, that after they passed through Paris, Cæsar's gentlemen-in-waiting wrote to Rome that they had not seen any trees in France, or houses, or walls, but only men, women, and sunshine.

The king, on the pretext of going out hunting, went to meet his guest two leagues outside the town. As he knew Cæsar was very fond of the name of Valentino, which he had used as cardinal, and still continued to employ with the title of Count, although he had resigned the archbishopric which gave him the name, he there and then bestowed on him the investiture of Valence, in Dauphiné, with the title of Duke and a pension of 20,000 francs; then, when he had made this magnificent gift and talked with him for nearly a couple of hours, he took his leave, to enable him to prepare the splendid entry he was proposing to make.

It was Wednesday, the 18th of December 1498, when Cæsar Borgia entered the town of Chinon, with pomp worthy of the son of a pope who is about to marry the daughter of a king. The procession began with four-and-twenty mules, caparisoned in red, adorned with escutcheons bearing the duke's arms, laden with carved trunks and chests inlaid with ivory and silver; after them came four-and-twenty more, also caparisoned, this time in the livery of the King of France, yellow and red; next after these came ten other mules, covered in yellow satin with red cross bars; and lastly another ten, covered with striped cloth of gold, the stripes alternately raised and flat gold.

Behind the seventy mules which led the procession there pranced sixteen handsome battle-horses, led by equerries who marched alongside; these were followed by eighteen hunters ridden by eighteen pages, who were about fourteen or fifteen years of age; sixteen of them were dressed in crimson velvet, and two in raised gold cloth; so elegantly dressed were these two children, who were also the best looking of the little band, that the sight of them gave rise to strange suspicions as to the

reason for this preference, if one may believe what Brantôme says. Finally, behind these eighteen horses came six beautiful mules, all harnessed with red velvet, and led by six valets, also in velvet to match.

The third group consisted of, first, two mules quite covered with cloth of gold, each carrying two chests in which it was said that the duke's treasure was stored, the precious stones he was bringing to his *fiancée*, and the relics and papal bulls that his father had charged him to convey for him to Louis XII. These were followed by twenty gentlemen dressed in cloth of gold and silver, among whom rode Paul Giordano Orsino and several barons and knights among the chiefs of the state ecclesiastic.

Next came two drums, one rebeck, and four soldiers blowing trumpets and silver clarions; then, in the midst of a party of four-and-twenty lacqueys, dressed half in crimson velvet and half in yellow silk, rode Messire George d'Amboise and Monseigneur the Duke of Valentinois. Cæsar was mounted on a handsome tall courser, very richly harnessed, in a robe half red satin and half cloth of gold, embroidered all over with pearls and precious stones; in his cap were two rows of rubies, the size of beans, which reflected so brilliant a light that one might have fancied they were the famous carbuncles of the *Arabian Nights*; he also wore on his neck a collar worth at least 200,000 livres; indeed, there was no part of him, even down to his boots, that was not laced with gold and edged with pearls. His horse was covered with a cuirass in a pattern of golden foliage of wonderful workmanship, among which there appeared to grow, like flowers, nosegays of pearls and clusters of rubies.

Lastly, bringing up the rear of the magnificent cortège, behind the duke came twenty-four mules with red caparisons bearing his arms, carrying his silver plate, tents, and baggage.

What gave to all the cavalcade an air of most wonderful luxury and extravagance was that the horses and mules were shod with golden shoes, and these were so badly nailed on that more than three-quarters of their number were lost on the road.

For this extravagance Caesar was greatly blamed, for it was thought an audacious thing to put on his horses' feet a metal of which king's crowns are made.

But all this pomp had no effect on the lady for whose sake it had been displayed; for when Doña Carlota was told that Cæsar Borgia had come to France in the hope of becoming her husband, she replied simply that she would never take a priest for her husband, and moreover the son of a priest; a man who was not only an assassin, but a fratricide; not only a man of infamous birth, but still more infamous in his morals and his actions.

But, in default of the haughty lady of Aragon, Cæsar soon found another princess of noble blood who consented to be his wife: this was Mademoiselle d'Albret, daughter of the King of Navarre. The marriage, arranged on condition that the pope should pay 200,000 ducats as dowry to the bride, and should make her brother cardinal, was celebrated on the 10th of May; and on the Whitsunday following the Duke of Valentinois received the order of St. Michael, an order founded by Louis XI, and esteemed at this period as the highest in the gift of the kings of France. The news of this marriage, which made an alliance with Louis XII certain, was received with great joy by the pope, who at once gave orders for bonfires and illuminations all over the town.

Louis XII was not only grateful to the pope for dissolving his marriage with Jeanne of France and authorising his union with Anne of Brittany, but he considered it indispensable to his designs in Italy to have the pope as his ally. So he promised the Duke of Valentinois to put three hundred lances at his disposal, as soon as he had made an entry into Milan, to be used to further his own private interests, and against whomsoever he pleased except only the allies of France. The conquest of Milan should be undertaken so soon as Louis felt assured of the support of the Venetians, or at least of their neutrality, and he had sent them ambassadors authorised to promise in his name the restoration of Cremona and Ghiera d'Adda when he had completed the conquest of Lombardy.

CHAPTER IX

EVERYTHING from without was favouring Alexander's encroaching policy, when he was compelled to turn his eyes from France towards the centre of Italy: in Florence dwelt a man, neither duke, nor king, nor soldier, a man whose power was in his genius, whose armour was his purity, who owned no offensive weapon but his tongue, and who yet began to grow more dangerous for him than all the kings, dukes, princes, in the whole world could ever be; this man was the poor Dominican monk Girolamo Savonarola, the same who had refused absolution to Lorenzo dei Medici because he would not restore the liberty of Florence.

Girolamo Savonarola had prophesied the invasion of a force from beyond the Alps, and Charles VIII had conquered Naples; Girolamo Savonarola had prophesied to Charles VIII that because he had failed to fulfil the mission of liberator entrusted to him by God, he was threatened with a great misfortune as a punishment, and Charles was dead; lastly, Savonarola had prophesied his own fall, like the man who paced around the holy city for eight days, crying, "Woe to Jerusalem!" and on the ninth day, "Woe be on my own head!" None the less, the Florentine reformer, who could not recoil from any danger, was determined to attack the colossal abomination that was seated on St. Peter's holy throne: each debauch, each fresh crime that lifted up its brazen face to the light of day or tried to hide its shameful head beneath the veil of night, he had never failed to point out to the people, denouncing it as the offspring of the pope's luxurious living and lust of power. Thus had he stigmatised Alexander's new amour with the beautiful Giulia Farnese, who in the preceding April had added another

son to the pope's family; thus had he cursed the Duke of Gandia's murderer, the lustful, jealous fratricide; lastly, he had pointed out to the Florentines, who were excluded from the league then forming, what sort of future was in store for them when the Borgias should have made themselves masters of the small principalities and should come to attack the duchies and republics. It was clear that in Savonarola the pope had an enemy at once temporal and spiritual, whose importunate and threatening voice must be silenced at any cost.

But mighty as the pope's power was, to accomplish a design like this was no easy matter. Savonarola, preaching the stern principles of liberty, had united to his cause, even in the midst of rich, pleasure-loving Florence, a party of some size, known as the *Piagnoni*, or the Penitents: this band was composed of citizens who were anxious for reform in Church and State, who accused the Medici of enslaving the fatherland and the Borgias of upsetting the faith, who demanded two things, that the republic should return to her democratic principles, and religion to a primitive simplicity. Towards the first of these projects considerable progress had been made, since they had successively obtained, first, an amnesty for all crimes and delinquencies committed under other governments; secondly, the abolition of the *balia*, which was an aristocratic magistracy; thirdly, the establishment of a sovereign council, composed of 1800 citizens; and lastly, the substitution of popular elections for drawing by lot and for oligarchical nominations: these changes had been effected in spite of the two other factions, the *Arrabiati*, or Madmen, who, consisting of the richest and noblest youths of the Florentine patrician families, desired to have an oligarchical government; and the *Bigi*, or Greys, so called because they always held their meetings in the shade, who desired the return of the Medici.

The first measure Alexander used against the growing power of Savonarola was to declare him heretic, and as such banished from the pulpit; but Savonarola had eluded this prohibition by making his pupil and friend, Domenico Bonvicini di Pescia, preach in his stead. The result was that the master's teachings

were issued from other lips, and that was all; the seed, though scattered by another hand, fell none the less on fertile soil, where it would soon burst into flower. Moreover, Savonarola now set an example that was followed to good purpose by Luther, when, twenty-two years later, he burned Leo x's bull of excommunication at Wittenberg; he was weary of silence, so he declared, on the authority of Pope Pelagius, that an unjust excommunication had no efficacy, and that the person excommunicated unjustly did not even need to get absolution. So on Christmas Day 1497 he declared that by the inspiration of God he renounced his obedience to a corrupt master; and he began to preach once more in the cathedral, with a success that was all the greater for the interruption, and an influence far more formidable than before, because it was strengthened by that sympathy of the masses which an unjust persecution always inspires.

Then Alexander made overtures to Leonardo dei Medici, vicar of the archbishopric of Florence, to obtain the punishment of the rebel: Leonardo, in obedience to the orders he received from Rome, issued a mandate forbidding the faithful to attend at Savonarola's sermons. After this mandate, any who should hear the discourses of the excommunicated monk would be refused communion and confession; and as when they died they would be contaminated with heresy, in consequence of their spiritual intercourse with a heretic, their dead bodies would be dragged on a hurdle and deprived of the rights of sepulture. Savonarola appealed from the mandate of his superior both to the people and to the Signoria, and the two together gave orders to the episcopal vicar to leave Florence within two hours: this happened at the beginning of the year 1498.

The expulsion of Leonardo dei Medici was a new triumph for Savonarola, so, wishing to turn to good moral account his growing influence, he resolved to convert the last day of the carnival, hitherto given up to worldly pleasures, into a day of religious sacrifice. So actually on Shrove Tuesday a considerable number of boys were collected in front of the cathedral,

and there divided into bands, which traversed the whole town, making a house-to-house visitation, claiming all profane books, licentious paintings, lutes, harps, cards and dice, cosmetics and perfumes—in a word, all the hundreds of products of a corrupt society and civilisation, by the aid of which Satan at times makes victorious war on God. The inhabitants of Florence obeyed, and came forth to the Piazza of the Duomo, bringing these works of perdition, which were soon piled up in a huge stack, which the youthful reformers set on fire, singing religious psalms and hymns the while. On this pile were burned many copies of Boccaccio and of Morgante Maggiore, and pictures by Fra Bartolommeo, who from that day forward renounced the art of this world to consecrate his brush utterly and entirely to the reproduction of religious scenes.

A reform such as this was terrifying to Alexander; so he resolved on fighting Savonarola with his own weapons—that is, by the force of eloquence. He chose as the Dominican's opponent a preacher of recognised talent, called Fra Francesco di Paglia; and he sent him to Florence, where he began to preach in Santa Croce, accusing Savonarola of heresy and impiety. At the same time the pope, in a new brief, announced to the Signoria that unless they forbade the arch-heretic to preach, all the goods of Florentine merchants who lived on the papal territory would be confiscated, and the republic laid under an interdict and declared the spiritual and temporal enemy of the Church. The Signoria, abandoned by France, and aware that the material power of Rome was increasing in a frightful manner, was forced this time to yield, and to issue to Savonarola an order to leave off preaching. He obeyed, and bade farewell to his congregation in a sermon full of strength and eloquence.

But the withdrawal of Savonarola, so far from calming the ferment, had increased it: there was talk about his prophecies being fulfilled; and some zealots, more ardent than their master, added miracle to inspiration, and loudly proclaimed that Savonarola had offered to go down into the vaults of the cathedral with his antagonist, and there bring a dead man to life again,

to prove that his doctrine was true, promising to declare himself vanquished if the miracle were performed by his adversary. These rumours reached the ears of Fra Francesco, and as he was a man of warm blood, who counted his own life as nothing if it might be spent to help his cause, he declared in all humility that he felt he was too great a sinner for God to work a miracle in his behalf; but he proposed another challenge: he would try with Savonarola the ordeal of fire. He knew, he said, that he must perish, but at least he should perish avenging the cause of religion, since he was certain to involve in his destruction the tempter who plunged so many souls beside his own into eternal damnation.

The proposition made by Fra Francesco was taken to Savonarola; but as he had never proposed the earlier challenge, he hesitated to accept the second; hereupon his disciple, Fra Domenico Bonvicini, more confident than his master in his own power, declared himself ready to accept the trial by fire in his stead, so certain was he that God would perform a miracle by the intercession of Savonarola, His prophet. Instantly the report spread through Florence that the mortal challenge was accepted; Savonarola's partisans, all men of the strongest convictions, felt no doubt as to the success of their cause. His enemies were enchanted at the thought of the heretic giving himself to the flames; and the indifferent saw in the ordeal a spectacle of real and terrible interest.

But the devotion of Fra Bonvicini of Pescia was not what Fra Francesco was reckoning with. He was willing, no doubt, to die a terrible death, but on condition that Savonarola died with him. What mattered to him the death of an obscure disciple like Fra Bonvicini? It was the master he would strike, the great teacher who must be involved in his own ruin. So he refused to enter the fire except with Savonarola himself, and, playing this terrible game in his own person, would not allow his adversary to play it by proxy.

Then a thing happened which certainly no one could have anticipated. In the place of Fra Francesco, who would not tilt with any but the master, two Franciscan monks appeared

to tilt with the disciple. These were Fra Nicolas de Pilly and Fra Andrea Rondinelli. Immediately the partisans of Savonarola, seeing this arrival of reinforcements for their antagonist, came forward in a crowd to try the ordeal. The Franciscans were unwilling to be behindhand, and everybody took sides with equal ardour for one or other party. All Florence was like a den of madmen; everyone wanted the ordeal, everyone wanted to go into the fire; not only did men challenge one another, but women and even children were clamouring to be allowed to try. At last the Signoria, reserving this privilege for the first applicants, ordered that the strange duel should take place only between Fra Domenico Bonvicini and Fra Andrea Rondinelli; ten of the citizens were to arrange all details; the day was fixed for the 7th of April 1498, and the place the Piazza del Palazzo.

The judges of the field made their arrangements conscientiously. By their orders scaffolding was erected at the appointed place, five feet in height, ten in width, and eighty feet long. This scaffolding was covered with faggots and heath, supported by cross-bars of the very driest wood that could be found. Two narrow paths were made, two feet wide at most, their entrance giving on the Loggia dei Lanzi, their exit exactly opposite. The loggia was itself divided into two by a partition, so that each champion had a kind of room to make his preparations in, just as in the theatre every actor has his dressing-room; but in this instance the tragedy that was about to be played was not a fictitious one.

The Franciscans arrived on the piazza and entered the compartment reserved for them without making any religious demonstration; while Savonarola, on the contrary, advanced to his own place in the procession, wearing the sacerdotal robes in which he had just celebrated the Holy Eucharist, and holding in his hand the sacred host for all the world to see, as it was enclosed in a crystal tabernacle. Fra Domenico di Pescia, the hero of the occasion, followed, bearing a crucifix, and all the Dominican monks, their red crosses in their hands, marched behind singing a psalm; while behind them again followed the

most considerable of the citizens of their party, bearing torches, for, sure as they were of the triumph of their cause, they wished to fire the faggots themselves. The piazza was so crowded that the people overflowed into all the streets around. In every door and window there was nothing to be seen but heads ranged one above the other; the terraces were covered with people, and curious spectators were observed on the roof of the Duomo and on the top of the Campanile.

But, brought face to face with the ordeal, the Franciscans raised such difficulties that it was very plain the heart of their champion was failing him. The first fear they expressed was that Fra Bonvicini was an enchanter, and so carried about him some talisman or charm which would save him from the fire. So they insisted that he should be stripped of all his clothes and put on others to be inspected by witnesses. Fra Bonvicini made no objection, though the suspicion was humiliating: he changed shirt, dress, and cowl. Then, when the Franciscans observed that Savonarola was placing the tabernacle in his hands, they protested that it was profanation to expose the sacred host to the risk of burning, that this was not in the bond, and if Bonvicini would not give up this supernatural aid, they for their part would give up the trial altogether. Savonarola replied that it was not astonishing that the champion of religion who put his faith in God should bear in his hands that very God to whom he entrusted his salvation. But this reply did not satisfy the Franciscans, who were unwilling to let go their contention. Savonarola remained inflexible, supporting his own right, and thus nearly four hours passed in the discussion of points which neither party would give up, and affairs remained *in statu quo*. Meanwhile the people, jammed together in the streets, on the terraces, on the roofs, since break of day, were suffering from hunger and thirst and beginning to get impatient: their impatience soon developed into loud murmurs, which reached even the champions' ears, so that the partisans of Savonarola, who felt such faith in him that they were confident of a miracle, entreated him to yield to all the conditions suggested. To this Savonarola replied that if it were himself

making the trial he would be less inexorable; but since another man was incurring the danger, he could not take too many precautions. Two more hours passed, while his partisans tried in vain to combat his refusals. At last, as night was coming on and the people grew ever more and more impatient and their murmurs began to assume a threatening tone, Bonvicini declared that he was ready to walk through the fire holding nothing in his hand but a crucifix. No one could refuse him this; so Fra Rondinelli was compelled to accept his proposition. The announcement was made to the populace that the champions had come to terms and the trial was about to take place. At this news the people calmed down, in the hope of being compensated at last for their long wait; but at that very moment a storm which had long been threatening broke over Florence with such fury that the faggots which had just been lighted were extinguished by the rain, leaving no possibility of their rekindling. From the moment when the people suspected that they had been fooled, their enthusiasm was changed into derision. They were ignorant from which side the difficulties had arisen that had hindered the trial, so they laid the responsibility on both champions without distinction. The Signoria, foreseeing the disorder that was now imminent, ordered the assembly to retire; but the assembly thought otherwise, and stayed on the piazza, waiting for the departure of the two champions, in spite of the fearful rain that still fell in torrents. Rondinelli was taken back amid shouts and hootings, and pursued with showers of stones. Savonarola, thanks to his sacred garments and the host which he still carried, passed calmly enough through the midst of the mob—a miracle quite as remarkable as if he had passed through the fire unscathed.

But it was only the sacred majesty of the host that had protected this man, who was indeed from this moment regarded as a false prophet: the crowd allowed Savonarola to return to his convent, but they regretted the necessity, so excited were they by the *Arrabbiati* party, who had always denounced him as a liar and a hypocrite. So when the next morning, Palm

Sunday, he stood up in the pulpit to explain his conduct, he could not obtain a moment's silence for insults, hooting, and loud laughter. Then the outcry, at first derisive, became menacing: Savonarola, whose voice was too weak to subdue the tumult, descended from his pulpit, retired into the sacristy, and thence to his convent, where he shut himself up in his cell. At that moment a cry was heard, and was repeated by everybody present: "To San Marco, to San Marco!" The rioters, few at first, were recruited by all the populace as they swept along the streets, and at last reached the convent, dashing like an angry sea against the wall. The doors, closed on Savonarola's entrance, soon crashed before the vehement onset of the powerful multitude, which struck down on the instant every obstacle it met: the whole convent was quickly flooded with people, and Savonarola, with his two confederates, Domenico Bonvicini and Silvestro Maruffi, was arrested in his cell, and conducted to prison amid the insults of the crowd, who, always in extremes, whether of enthusiasm or hatred, would have liked to tear them to pieces, and would not be quieted till they had exacted a promise that the prisoners should be forcibly compelled to make the trial of fire which they had refused to make of their own free will.

Alexander VI, as we may suppose, had not been without influence in bringing about this sudden and astonishing reaction, although he was not present in person; and he had scarcely learned the news of Savonarola's fall and arrest when he claimed him as subject to ecclesiastical jurisdiction. But in spite of the grant of indulgences wherewith this demand was accompanied, the Signoria insisted that Savonarola's trial should take place at Florence, adding a request—so as not to appear to withdraw the accused completely from the pontifical authority—that the pope would send two ecclesiastical judges to sit in the Florentine tribunal. Alexander, seeing that he would get nothing better from the magnificent republic, sent as deputies Gioacchino Turriano of Venice, General of the Dominicans, and Francesco Ramolini, doctor in law: they practically brought the sentence with them, declaring Savonarola

and his accomplices heretics, schismatics, persecutors of the Church and seducers of the people.

The firmness shown by the Florentines in claiming their rights of jurisdiction were nothing but an empty show to save appearances; the tribunal, as a fact, was composed of eight members, all known to be fervent haters of Savonarola, whose trial began with the torture. The result was that, feeble in body and constitutionally nervous and irritable, he had not been able to endure the rack, and, overcome by agony just at the moment when the executioner had lifted him up by the wrists and then dropped him a distance of two feet to the ground, he had confessed, in order to get some respite, that his prophecies were nothing more than conjectures. It is true that, so soon as he went back to prison, he protested against the confession, saying that it was the weakness of his bodily organs and his want of firmness that had wrested the lie from him, but that the truth really was that the Lord had several times appeared to him in his ecstasies and revealed the things that he had spoken. This protestation led to a new application of the torture, during which Savonarola succumbed once more to the dreadful pain, and once more retracted. But scarcely was he unbound, and was still lying on the bed of torture, when he declared that his confessions were the fault of his torturers, and the vengeance would recoil upon their heads; and he protested yet once more against all he had confessed and might confess again. A third time the torture produced the same avowals, and the relief that followed it the same retractations. The judges therefore, when they condemned him and his two disciples to the flames, decided that his confession should not be read aloud at the stake, according to custom, feeling certain that on this occasion also he would give it the lie, and that publicly, which, as anyone must see who knew the versatile spirit of the public, would be a most dangerous proceeding.

On the 23rd of May, the fire which had been promised to the people before was a second time prepared on the Piazza del Palazzo, and this time the crowd assembled quite certain

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THE EXECUTION OF SAVONAROLA

that they would not be disappointed of a spectacle so long anticipated. And towards eleven o'clock in the morning, Girolamo Savonarola, Domenico Bonvicini, and Silvestro Maruffi were led to the place of execution, degraded of their orders by the ecclesiastical judges, and bound all three to the same stake in the centre of an immense pile of wood. Then the bishop Pagnanoli told the condemned men that he cut them off from the Church. "Ay, from the Church militant," said Savonarola, who from that very hour, thanks to his martyrdom, was entering into the Church triumphant. No other words were spoken by the condemned men, for at this moment one of the *Arrabbiati*, a personal enemy of Savonarola, breaking through the hedge of guards around the scaffold, snatched the torch from the executioner's hand and himself set fire to the four corners of the pile. Savonarola and his disciples, from the moment when they saw the smoke arise, began to sing a psalm, and the flames enwrapped them on all sides with a glowing veil, while their religious song was yet heard mounting upward to the gates of heaven.

Pope Alexander VI was thus set free from perhaps the most formidable enemy who had ever risen against him, and the pontifical vengeance pursued the victims even after their death: the Signoria, yielding to his wishes, gave orders that the ashes of the prophet and his disciples should be thrown into the Arno. But certain half-burned fragments were picked up by the very soldiers whose business it was to keep the people back from approaching the fire, and the holy relics are even now shown, blackened by the flames, to the faithful, who if they no longer regard Savonarola as a prophet, revere him none the less as a martyr.

CHAPTER X

THE French army was now preparing to cross the Alps a second time, under the command of Trivulce. Louis XII had come as far as Lyons in the company of Cæsar Borgia and Giuliano della Rovere, on whom he had forced a reconciliation, and towards the beginning of the month of May had sent his vanguard before him, soon to be followed by the main body of the army. The forces he was employing in this second campaign of conquest were 1600 lances, 5000 Swiss, 4000 Gascons, and 3500 infantry, raised from all parts of France. On the 13th of August this whole body, amounting to nearly 15,000 men, who were to combine their forces with the Venetians, arrived beneath the walls of Arezzo, and immediately laid siege to the town.

Ludovico Sforza's position was a terrible one: he was now suffering from his imprudence in calling the French into Italy; all the allies he had thought he might count upon were abandoning him at the same moment, either because they were busy about their own affairs, or because they were afraid of the powerful enemy that the Duke of Milan had made for himself. Maximilian, who had promised him a contribution of 400 lances, to make up for not renewing the hostilities with Louis XII that had been interrupted, had just made a league with the circle of Swabia to war against the Swiss, whom he had declared rebels against the Empire. The Florentines, who had engaged to furnish him with 300 men-at-arms and 2000 infantry, if he would help them to retake Pisa, had just retracted their promise because of Louis XII's threats, and had undertaken to remain neutral. Frederic, who was holding back his troops for the defence of his own States, because he supposed, not without

reason, that, Milan once conquered, he would again have to defend Naples, sent him no help, no men, no money, in spite of his promises. Ludovico Sforza was therefore reduced to his own proper forces.

But as he was a man powerful in arms and clever in artifice, he did not allow himself to succumb at the first blow, and in all haste fortified Annona, Novaro, and Alessandria, sent off Cajazzo with troops to that part of the Milanese territory which borders on the states of Venice, and collected on the Po as many troops as he could. But these precautions availed him nothing against the impetuous onslaught of the French, who in a few days had taken Annona, Arezzo, Novaro, Voghiera, Castelnuovo, Ponte Corona, Tortone, and Alessandria, while Trivulce was on the march to Milan.

Seeing the rapidity of this conquest and their numerous victories, Ludovico Sforza, despairing of holding out in his capital, resolved to retire to Germany, with his children, his brother, Cardinal Ascanio Sforza, and his treasure, which had been reduced in the course of eight years from 1,500,000 to 200,000 ducats. But before he went he left Bernardino da Corte in charge of the castle of Milan. In vain did his friends warn him to distrust this man, in vain did his brother Ascanio offer to hold the fortress himself, and offer to hold it to the very last; Ludovico refused to make any change in his arrangements, and stated on the 2nd of September, leaving in the citadel three thousand foot and enough provisions, ammunition, and money to sustain a siege of several months.

Two days after Ludovico's departure, the French entered Milan. Ten days later Bernardino da Corte gave up the castle before a single gun had been fired. Twenty-one days had sufficed for the French to get possession of the various towns, the capital, and all the territories of their enemy.

Louis XII received the news of this success while he was at Lyons, and he at once started for Milan, where he was received with demonstrations of joy that were really sincere. Citizens of every rank had come out three miles' distance from the gates to receive him, and forty boys, dressed in cloth of gold and silk,

marched before him singing hymns of victory composed by poets of the period, in which the king was styled their liberator and the envoy of freedom. The great joy of the Milanese people was due to the fact that friends of Louis had been spreading reports beforehand that the King of France was rich enough to abolish all taxes. And so soon as the second day from his arrival at Milan the conqueror made some slight reduction, granted important favours to certain Milanese gentlemen, and bestowed the town of Vigavano on Trivulce as a reward for his swift and glorious campaign. But Cæsar Borgia, who had followed Louis XII with a view to playing his part in the great hunting-ground of Italy, scarcely waited for him to attain his end when he claimed the fulfilment of his promise, which the king with his accustomed loyalty hastened to perform. He instantly put at the disposal of Cæsar three hundred lances under the command of Yves d'Alègre, and four thousand Swiss under the command of the bailiff of Dijon, as a help in his work of reducing the *Vicars of the Church.*

We must now explain to our readers who these new personages were whom we introduce upon the scene by the above name.

During the eternal wars of Guelphs and Ghibellines and the long exile of the popes at Avignon, most of the towns and fortresses of the Romagna had been usurped by petty tyrants, who for the most part had received from the Empire the investiture of their new possessions; but ever since German influence had retired beyond the Alps, and the popes had again made Rome the centre of the Christian world, all the small princes, robbed of their original protector, had rallied round the papal see, and received at the hands of the pope a new investiture, and now they paid annual dues, for which they received the particular title of duke, count, or lord, and the general name of *Vicar of the Church.*

It had been no difficult matter for Alexander, scrupulously examining the actions and behaviour of these gentlemen during the seven years that had elapsed since he was exalted to St. Peter's throne, to find in the conduct of each one of them

something that could be called an infraction of the treaty made between vassals and suzerain; accordingly he brought forward his complaints at a tribunal established for the purpose, and obtained sentence from the judges to the effect that the vicars of the Church, having failed to fulfil the conditions of their investiture, were despoiled of their domains, which would again become the property of the Holy See. As the pope was now dealing with men against whom it was easier to pass a sentence than to get it carried out, he had nominated as captain-general the new Duke of Valentinois, who was commissioned to recover the territories for his own benefit. The lords in question were the Malatesti of Rimini, the Sforza of Pesaro, the Manfredi of Faenza, the Riarii of Imola and Forli, the Variani of Camerino, the Montefeltri of Urbino, and the Caetani of Sermoneta.

But the Duke of Valentinois, eager to keep as warm as possible his great friendship with his ally and relative Louis XII, was, as we know, staying with him at Milan so long as he remained there: where-after a month's occupation, the king retraced his steps to his own capital, the Duke of Valentinois ordered his men-at-arms and his Swiss to await him between Parma and Modena, and departed post-haste for Rome, to explain his plans to his father *vivâ voce* and to receive his final instructions. When he arrived, he found that the fortune of his sister Lucrezia had been greatly augmented in his absence, not from the side of her husband Alfonso, whose future was very uncertain now in consequence of Louis's successes, which had caused some coolness between Alfonso and the pope, but from her father's side, upon whom at this time she exercised an influence more astonishing than ever. The pope had declared Lucrezia Borgia of Aragon life-governor of Spoleto and its duchy, with all emoluments, rights, and revenues accruing thereunto. This had so greatly increased her power and improved her position, that in these days she never showed herself in public without a company of two hundred horses ridden by the most illustrious ladies and noblest knights of Rome. Moreover, as the twofold affection of her father was a secret to nobody, the

first prelates in the Church, the frequenters of the Vatican, the friends of His Holiness, were all her most humble servants; cardinals gave her their hands when she stepped from her litter or her horse, archbishops disputed the honour of celebrating mass in her private apartments.

But Lucrezia had been obliged to quit Rome in order to take possession of her new estates; and as her father could not spend much time away from his beloved daughter, he resolved to take into his hands the town of Nepi, which on a former occasion, as the reader will doubtless remember, he had bestowed on Ascanio Sforza in exchange for his suffrage. Ascanio had naturally lost this town when he attached himself to the fortunes of the Duke of Milan, his brother; and when the pope was about to take it again, he invited his daughter Lucrezia to join him there and be present at the rejoicings held in honour of his resuming its possession.

Lucrezia's readiness in giving way to her father's wishes brought her a new gift from him: this was the town and territory of Sermoneta, which belonged to the Caetani. Of course the gift was as yet a secret, because the two owners of the seigneury had first to be disposed of, one being Monsignore Giacomo Caetano, apostolic protonotary, the other Prospero Caetano, a young cavalier of great promise; but as both lived at Rome, and entertained no suspicion, but indeed supposed themselves to be in high favour with His Holiness, the one by virtue of his position, the other of his courage, the matter seemed to present no great difficulty. So directly after the return of Alexander to Rome, Giacomo Caetano was arrested, on what pretext we know not, was taken to the castle of Sant' Angelo, and there died shortly after, of poison: Prospero Caetano was strangled in his own house. After these two deaths, which both occurred so suddenly as to give no time for either to make a will, the pope declared that Sermoneta and all other property appertaining to the Caetani devolved upon the apostolic chamber; and they were sold to Lucrezia for the sum of 80,000 crowns, which her father refunded to her the day after. Though Cæsar hurried to Rome, he found when he

arrived that his father had been beforehand with him, and had made a beginning of his conquests.

Another fortune also had been making prodigious strides during Cæsar's stay in France, viz. the fortune of Gian Borgia, the pope's nephew, who had been one of the most devoted friends of the Duke of Gandia up to the time of his death. It was said in Rome, and not in a whisper, that the young cardinal owed the favours heaped upon him by His Holiness less to the memory of the brother than to the protection of the sister. Both these reasons made Gian Borgia a special object of suspicion to Cæsar, and it was with an inward vow that he should not enjoy his new dignities very long that the Duke of Valentinois heard that his cousin Gian had just been nominated cardinal *a latere* of all the Christian world, and had quitted Rome to make a circuit through all the pontifical states with a suite of archbishops, bishops, prelates, and gentlemen, such as would have done honour to the pope himself.

Cæsar had only come to Rome to get news; so he only stayed three days, and then, with all the troops His Holiness could supply, rejoined his forces on the borders of the Euza, and marched at once to Imola. This town, abandoned by its chiefs, who had retired to Forli, was forced to capitulate. Imola taken, Cæsar marched straight upon Forli. There he met with a serious check; a check, moreover, which came from a woman. Caterina Sforza, widow of Girolamo and mother of Ottaviano Riario, had retired to this town, and stirred up the courage of the garrison by putting herself, her goods and her person, under their protection. Cæsar saw that it was no longer a question of a sudden capture, but of a regular siege; so he began to make all his arrangements with a view to it, and placing a battery of cannon in front of the place where the walls seemed to him weakest, he ordered an uninterrupted fire, to be continued until the breach was practicable.

When he returned to the camp after giving this order, he found there Gian Borgia, who had gone to Rome from Ferrara and was unwilling to be so near Cæsar without paying him a visit: he was received with effusion and apparently the greatest

joy, and stayed three days; on the fourth day all the officers and members of the court were invited to a grand farewell supper, and Cæsar bade farewell to his cousin, charging him with despatches for the pope, and lavishing upon him all the tokens of affection he had shown on his arrival.

Cardinal Gian Borgia posted off as soon as he left the supper-table, but on arriving at Urbino he was seized with such a sudden and strange indisposition that he was forced to stop; but after a few minutes, feeling rather better, he went on; scarcely, however, had he entered Rocca Contrada when he again felt so extremely ill that he resolved to go no farther, and stayed a couple of days in the town. Then, as he thought he was a little better again, and as he had heard the news of the taking of Forli and also that Caterina Sforza had been taken prisoner while she was making an attempt to retire into the castle, he resolved to go back to Cæsar and congratulate him on his victory; but at Fossombrone he was forced to stop a third time, although he had given up his carriage for a litter. This was his last halt: the same day he sought his bed, never to rise from it again; three days later he was dead.

His body was taken to Rome and buried without any ceremony in the church of Santa Maria del Popolo, where lay awaiting him the corpse of his friend the Duke of Gandia; and there was now no more talk of the young cardinal, high as his rank had been, than if he had never existed. Thus in gloom and silence passed away all those who were swept to destruction by the ambition of that terrible trio, Alexander, Lucrezia, and Cæsar.

Almost at the same time Rome was terrified by another murder. Don Giovanni Cerviglione, a gentleman by birth and a brave soldier, captain of the pope's men-at-arms, was attacked one evening by the sbirri, as he was on his way home from supping with Don Elisio Pignatelli. One of the men asked his name, and as he pronounced it, seeing that there was no mistake, plunged a dagger into his breast, while a second man with a back stroke of his sword cut off his head, which lay actually at his feet before his body had time to fall.

The governor of Rome lodged a complaint against this assassination with the pope; but quickly perceiving, by the way his intimation was received, that he would have done better to say nothing, he stopped the inquiries he had started, so that neither of the murderers was ever arrested. But the rumour was circulated that Cæsar, in the short stay he had made at Rome, had had a rendezvous with Cerviglione's wife, who was a Borgia by birth, and that her husband when he heard of this infringement of conjugal duty had been angry enough to threaten her and her lover too: the threat had reached Cæsar's ears, who, making a long arm of Michelotto, had, himself at Forli, struck down Cerviglione in the streets of Rome.

Another unexpected death followed so quickly on that of Don Giovanni Cerviglione that it could not but be attributed to the same originator, if not to the same cause. Monsignore Agnelli of Mantua, archbishop of Cosenza, clerk of the chamber and vice-legate of Viterbo, having fallen into disgrace with His Holiness, how it is not known, was poisoned at his own table, at which he had passed a good part of the night in cheerful conversation with three or four guests, the poison gliding meanwhile through his veins; then going to bed in perfect health, he was found dead in the morning. His possessions were at once divided into three portions: the land and houses were given to the Duke of Valentinois; the bishopric went to Francesco Borgia, son of Calixtus III; and the office of clerk of the chamber was sold for 5000 ducats to Ventura Bonnassai, a merchant of Siena, who produced this sum for Alexander, and settled down the very same day in the Vatican.

This last death served the purpose of determining a point of law hitherto uncertain: as Monsignore Agnelli's natural heirs had made some difficulty about being disinherited, Alexander issued a brief, whereby he took from every cardinal and every priest the right of making a will, and declared that all their property should henceforth devolve upon him.

But Cæsar was stopped short in the midst of his victories. Thanks to the 200,000 ducats that yet remained in his treasury,

Ludovico Sforza had levied 500 men-at-arms from Burgundy and 8000 Swiss infantry, with whom he had entered Lombardy. So Trivulce, to face this enemy, had been compelled to call back Yves d'Alègre and the troops that Louis XII had lent to Cæsar; consequently Cæsar, leaving behind a body of pontifical soldiery as garrison at Forli and Imola, betook himself with the rest of his force to Rome.

It was Alexander's wish that his entry should be a triumph; so when he learned that the quartermasters of the army were only a few leagues from the town, he sent out runners to invite the royal ambassadors, the cardinals, the prelates, the Roman barons, and municipal dignitaries to make procession with all their suite to meet the Duke of Valentinois; and as it always happens that the pride of those who command is surpassed by the baseness of those who obey, the orders were not only fulfilled to the letter, but beyond it.

The entry of Cæsar took place on the 26th of February 1500. Although this was the great Jubilee year, the festivals of the carnival began none the less for that, and were conducted in a manner even more extravagant and licentious than usual; and the conqueror after the first day prepared a new display of ostentation, which he concealed under the veil of a masquerade. As he was pleased to identify himself with the glory, genius, and fortune of the great man whose name he bore, he resolved on a representation of the triumph of Julius Cæsar, to be given on the Piazza di Navona, the ordinary place for holding the carnival fêtes. The next day, therefore, he and his retinue started from that square, and traversed all the streets of Rome, wearing classical costumes and riding in antique cars, on one of which Cæsar stood, clad in the robe of an emperor of old, his brow crowned with a golden laurel wreath, surrounded by lictors, soldiers, and ensign-bearers, who carried banners whereon was inscribed the motto, *Aut Cæsar, aut nihil.*

Finally, on the fourth Sunday in Lent, the pope conferred upon Cæsar the dignity he had so long coveted, and appointed him general and gonfaloniere of the Holy Church.

In the meanwhile Sforza had crossed the Alps and passed the Lake of Como, amid acclamations of joy from his former subjects, who had quickly lost the enthusiasm that the French army and Louis's promises had inspired. These demonstrations were so noisy at Milan, that Trivulce, judging that there was no safety for a French garrison in remaining there, made his way to Novarra. Experience proved that he was not deceived; for scarcely had the Milanese observed his preparations for departure when a suppressed excitement began to spread through the town, and soon the streets were filled with armed men. This murmuring crowd had to be passed through, sword in hand and lance in rest; and scarcely had the French got outside the gates when the mob rushed out after the army into the country, pursuing them with shouts and hooting as far as the banks of the Tesino. Trivulce left 400 lances at Novarra as well as the 3000 Swiss that Yves d'Alègre had brought from the Romagna, and directed his course with the rest of the army towards Mortara, where he stopped at last to await the help he had demanded from the King of France. Behind him Cardinal Ascanio and Ludovico entered Milan amid the acclamations of the whole town.

Neither of them lost any time, and wishing to profit by this enthusiasm, Ascanio undertook to besiege the castle of Milan while Ludovico should cross the Tesino and attack Novarra.

There besiegers and besieged were sons of the same nation; for Yves d'Alègre had had scarcely as many as 300 French with him, and Ludovico 500 Italians. In fact, for the last sixteen years the Swiss had been practically the only infantry in Europe, and all the Powers came, purse in hand, to draw from the mighty reservoir of their mountains. The consequence was that these rude children of William Tell, put up to auction by the nations, and carried away from the humble, hardy life of a mountain people into cities of wealth and pleasure, had lost, not their ancient courage, but that rigidity of principle for which they had been distinguished before their intercourse with other nations. From being models of honour and good faith they had become a kind of

marketable ware, always ready for sale to the highest bidder. The French were the first to experience this venality, which later on proved so fatal to Ludovico Sforza.

Now the Swiss in the garrison at Novarra had been in communication with their compatriots in the vanguard of the ducal army, and when they found that they, who as a fact were unaware that Ludovico's treasure was nearly exhausted, were better fed as well as better paid than themselves, they offered to give up the town and go over to the Milanese, if they could be certain of the same pay. Ludovico, as we may well suppose, closed with this bargain. The whole of Novarra was given up to him except the citadel, which was defended by Frenchmen: thus the enemy's army was recruited by 3000 men. Then Ludovico made the mistake of stopping to besiege the castle instead of marching on to Mortara with the new reinforcement. The result of this was that Louis XII, to whom runners had been sent by Trivulce, understanding his perilous position, hastened the departure of the French gendarmerie who were already collected to cross into Italy, sent off the bailiff of Dijon to levy new Swiss forces, and ordered Cardinal Amboise, his prime minister, to cross the Alps and take up a position at Asti, to hurry on the work of collecting the troops. There the cardinal found a nest-egg of 3000 men. La Trimouille added 1500 lances and 6000 French infantry; finally, the bailiff of Dijon arrived with 10,000 Swiss; so that, counting the troops which Trivulce had at Mortara, Louis XII found himself master on the other side of the Alps of the first army any French king had ever led out to battle. Soon, by good marching, and before Ludovico knew the strength or even the existence of this army, it took up a position between Novarra and Milan, cutting off all communication between the duke and his capital. He was therefore compelled, in spite of his inferior numbers, to prepare for a pitched battle.

But it so happened that just when the preparations for a decisive engagement were being made on both sides, the Swiss Diet, learning that the sons of Helvetia were on the point of

cutting one another's throats, sent orders to all the Swiss serving in either army to break their engagements and return to the fatherland. But during the two months that had passed between the surrender of Novarra and the arrival of the French army before the town, there had been a very great change in the face of things, because Ludovico Sforza's treasure was now exhausted. New confabulations had gone on between the outposts, and this time, thanks to the money sent by Louis XII, it was the Swiss in the service of France who were found to be the better fed and better paid. The worthy Helvetians, since they no longer fought for their own liberty, knew the value of their blood too well to allow a single drop of it to be spilled for less than its weight in gold: the result was that, as they had betrayed Yves d'Alègre, they resolved to betray Ludovico Sforza too; and while the recruits brought in by the bailiff of Dijon were standing firmly by the French flag, careless of the order of the Diet, Ludovico's auxiliaries declared that in fighting against their Swiss brethren they would be acting in disobedience to the Diet, and would risk capital punishment in the end—a danger that nothing would induce them to incur unless they immediately received the arrears of their pay. The duke, who had spent the last ducat he had with him, and was entirely cut off from his capital, knew that he could not get money till he had fought his way through to it, and therefore invited the Swiss to make one last effort, promising them not only the pay that was in arrears but a double hire. But unluckily the fulfilment of this promise was dependent on the doubtful issue of a battle, and the Swiss replied that they had far too much respect for their country to disobey its decree, and that they loved their brothers far too well to consent to shed their blood without reward; and therefore Sforza would do well not to count upon them, since indeed the very next day they proposed to return to their homes. The duke then saw that all was lost, but he made a last appeal to their honour, adjuring them at least to ensure his personal safety by making it a condition of capitulation. But they replied that

even if a condition of such a kind would not make capitulation impossible, it would certainly deprive them of advantages which they had a right to expect, and on which they counted as indemnification for the arrears of their pay. They pretended, however, at last that they were touched by the prayers of the man whose orders they had obeyed so long, and offered to conceal him dressed in their clothes among their ranks. This proposition was barely plausible; for Sforza was short and by this time an old man, and he could not possibly escape recognition in the midst of an army where the oldest was not past thirty and the shortest not less than five foot six. Still, this was his last chance, and he did not reject it at once, but tried to modify it so that it might help him in his straits. His plan was to disguise himself as a Franciscan monk, so that mounted on a shabby horse he might pass for their chaplain; the others, Galeazzo di San Severino, who commanded under him, and his two brothers, were all tall men, so, adopting the dress of common soldiers, they hoped they might escape detection in the Swiss ranks.

Scarcely were these plans settled when the duke heard that the capitulation was signed between Trivulce and the Swiss, who had made no stipulation in favour of him and his generals. They were to go over the next day with arms and baggage right into the French army; so the last hope of the wretched Ludovico and his generals must needs be in their disguise. And so it was. San Severino and his brothers took their place in the ranks of the infantry, and Sforza took his among the baggage, clad in a monk's frock, with the hood pulled over his eyes.

The army marched off; but the Swiss, who had first trafficked in their blood, now trafficked in their honour. The French were warned of the disguise of Sforza and his generals, and thus they were all four recognised, and Sforza was arrested by Trimouille himself. It is said that the price paid for this treason was the town of Bellinzona; for it then belonged to the French, and when the Swiss returned to their mountains and took possession of it, Louis XII took no steps to get it back again.

When Ascanio Sforza, who, as we know, had stayed at Milan, learned the news of this cowardly desertion, he supposed that his cause was lost and that it would be the best plan for him to fly, before he found himself a prisoner in the hands of his brother's old subjects: such a change of face on the people's part would be very natural, and they might propose perhaps to purchase their own pardon at the price of his liberty; so he fled by night with the chief nobles of the Ghibelline party, taking the road to Piacenza, on his way to the kingdom of Naples. But when he arrived at Rivolta, he remembered that there was living in that town an old friend of his childhood, by name Conrad Lando, whom he had helped to much wealth in his days of power; and as Ascanio and his companions were extremely tired, he resolved to beg his hospitality for a single night. Conrad received them with every sign of joy, putting all his house and servants at their disposal. But scarcely had they retired to bed when he sent a runner to Piacenza, to inform Carlo Orsini, at that time commanding the Venetian garrison, that he was prepared to deliver up Cardinal Ascanio and the chief men of the Milanese army. Carlo Orsini did not care to resign to another so important an expedition, and mounting hurriedly with twenty-five men, he first surrounded Conrad's house, and then entered sword in hand the chamber wherein Ascanio and his companions lay, and being surprised in the middle of their sleep, they yielded without resistance. The prisoners were taken to Venice, but Louis XII claimed them, and they were given up. Thus the King of France found himself master of Ludovico Sforza and of Ascanio, of a legitimate nephew of the great Francesco Sforza named Hermes, of two bastards named Alessandro and Cortino, and of Francesco, son of the unhappy Gian Galeazzo who had been poisoned by his uncle.

Louis XII, wishing to make an end of the whole family at a blow, forced Francesco to enter a cloister, shut up Cardinal Ascanio in the tower of Bourges, threw into prison Alessandro, Cortino, and Hermes, and finally, after transferring the wretched Ludovico from the fortress of Pierre-Eucise to Lys-Saint-

George, he relegated him for good and all to the castle of Loches, where he lived for ten years in captivity in absolute solitude and utter destitution, and there died, cursing the day when the idea first came into his head of enticing the French into Italy.

The news of the catastrophe of Ludovico and his family caused the greatest joy at Rome, for, while the French were consolidating their power in Milanese territory, the Holy See was gaining ground in the Romagna, where no further opposition was offered to Cæsar's conquest. So the runners who brought the news were rewarded with valuable presents, and it was published throughout the whole town of Rome to the sound of the trumpet and drum. The war-cry of Louis, *France, France*, and that of the Orsini, *Orso, Orso*, rang through all the streets, which in the evening were illuminated, as though Constantinople or Jerusalem had been taken. And the pope gave the people fêtes and fireworks, without troubling his head the least in the world either about its being Holy Week, or because the Jubilee had attracted more than 200,000 people to Rome; the temporal interests of his family seeming to him far more important than the spiritual interests of his subjects.

CHAPTER XI

ONE thing alone was wanting to assure the success of the vast projects that the pope and his son were founding upon the friendship of Louis and an alliance with him—that is, money. But Alexander was not the man to be troubled about a paltry worry of that kind; true, the sale of benefices was by now exhausted, the ordinary and extraordinary taxes had already been collected for the whole year, and the prospect of inheritance from cardinals and prelates was a poor thing now that the richest of them had been poisoned; but Alexander had other means at his disposal, which were none the less efficacious because they were less often used.

The first he employed was to spread a report that the Turks were threatening an invasion of Christendom, and that he knew for a positive fact that before the end of the summer Bajazet would land two considerable armies, one in Romagna, the other in Calabria; he therefore published two bulls, one to levy tithes of all ecclesiastical revenues in Europe, of whatever nature they might be, the other to force the Jews into paying an equivalent sum: both bulls contained the severest sentences of excommunication against those who refused to submit, or attempted opposition.

The second plan was the selling of indulgences, a thing which had never been done before: these indulgences affected the people who had been prevented by reasons of health or business from coming to Rome for the Jubilee; the journey by this expedient was rendered unnecessary, and sins were pardoned for a third of what it would have cost, and just as completely as if the faithful had fulfilled every condition of the pilgrimage. For gathering in this tax a veritable army of

collectors was instituted, a certain Ludovico della Torre at their head. The sum that Alexander brought into the pontifical treasury is incalculable, and some idea of it may be gathered from the fact that 799,000 livres in gold was paid in from the territory of Venice alone.

But as the Turks did as a fact make some sort of demonstration from the Hungarian side, and the Venetians began to fear that they might be coming in their direction, they asked for help from the pope, who gave orders that at twelve o'clock in the day in all his States an *Ave Maria* should be said, to pray God to avert the danger which was threatening the most serene republic. This was the only help the Venetians got from His Holiness in exchange for the 799,000 livres in gold that he had got from them.

But it seemed as though God wished to show His strange vicar on earth that He was angered by this mockery of sacred things, and on the Eve of St. Peter's Day, just as the pope was passing the Campanile on his way to the tribune of benedictions, an enormous piece of iron broke off and fell at his feet; and then, as though one warning had not been enough, on the next day, St. Peter's, when the pope happened to be in one of the rooms of his ordinary dwelling with Cardinal Capuano and Monsignore Poto, his private chamberlain, he saw through the open windows that a very black cloud was coming up. Foreseeing a thunderstorm, he ordered the cardinal and the chamberlain to shut the windows. He had not been mistaken; for even as they were obeying his command, there came up such a furious gust of wind that the highest chimney of the Vatican was overturned, just as a tree is rooted up, and was dashed upon the roof, breaking it in; smashing the upper flooring, it fell into the very room where they were. Terrified by the noise of this catastrophe, which made the whole palace tremble, the cardinal and Monsignore Poto turned round, and seeing the room full of dust and débris, sprang out upon the parapet and shouted to the guards at the gate, "The pope is dead, the pope is dead!" At this cry, the guards ran up and discovered three persons lying in the

rubbish on the floor, one dead and the other two dying. The dead man was a gentleman of Siena called Lorenzo Chigi, and the dying were two resident officials of the Vatican. They had been walking across the floor above, and had been flung down with the débris. But Alexander was not to be found; and as he gave no answer, though they kept on calling to him, the belief that he had perished was confirmed, and very soon spread about the town. But he had only fainted, and at the end of a certain time he began to come to himself, and moaned, whereupon he was discovered, dazed with the blow, and injured, though not seriously, in several parts of his body. He had been saved by little short of a miracle: a beam had broken in half and had left each of its two ends in the side walls; and one of these had formed a sort of roof over the pontifical throne; the pope, who was sitting there at the time, was protected by this overarching beam, and had received only a few contusions.

The two contradictory reports of the sudden death and the miraculous preservation of the pope spread rapidly through Rome; and the Duke of Valentinois, terrified at the thought of what a change might be wrought in his own fortunes by any slight accident to the Holy Father, hurried to the Vatican, unable to assure himself by anything less than the evidence of his own eyes. Alexander desired to render public thanks to Heaven for the protection that had been granted him, and on the very same day was carried to the church of Santa Maria del Popolo, escorted by a numerous procession of prelates and men-at-arms, his pontifical seat borne by two valets, two equerries, and two grooms. In this church were buried the Duke of Gandia and Gian Borgia, and perhaps Alexander was drawn thither by some relics of devotion, or may be by the recollection of his love for his former mistress, Rosa Vanozza, whose image, in the guise of the Madonna, was exposed for the veneration of the faithful in a chapel on the left of the high altar. Stopping before this altar, the pope offered to the church the gift of a magnificent chalice in which were three hundred gold crowns, which the Cardinal of Siena poured out into a silver

paten before the eyes of all, much to the gratification of the pontifical vanity.

But before he left Rome to complete the conquest of the Romagna, the Duke of Valentinois had been reflecting that the marriage, once so ardently desired, between Lucrezia and Alfonso had been quite useless to himself and his father. There was more than this to be considered: Louis XII's rest in Lombardy was only a halt, and Milan was evidently but the stage before Naples. It was very possible that Louis was annoyed about the marriage which converted his enemy's nephew into the son-in-law of his ally. Whereas, if Alfonso were dead, Lucrezia would be in the position to marry some powerful lord of Ferrara or Brescia, who would be able to help his brother-in-law in the conquest of Romagna. Alfonso was now not only useless but dangerous, which to anyone with the character of the Borgias perhaps seemed worse. The death of Alfonso was resolved upon. But Lucrezia's husband, who had understood for a long time past what danger he incurred by living near his terrible father-in-law, had retired to Naples. Since, however, neither Alexander nor Cæsar had changed in their perpetual dissimulation towards him, he was beginning to lose his fear, when he received an invitation from the pope and his son to take part in a bull-fight which was to be held in the Spanish fashion in honour of the duke before his departure. In the present precarious position of Naples it would not have been good policy for Alfonso to afford Alexander any sort of pretext for a rupture, so he would not refuse without a motive, and betook himself to Rome. It was thought of no use to consult Lucrezia in this affair, for she had two or three times displayed an absurd attachment for her husband, and they left her undisturbed in her government of Spoleto.

Alfonso was received by the pope and the duke with every demonstration of sincere friendship, and rooms in the Vatican were assigned to him that he had inhabited before with Lucrezia, in that part of the building which is known as the Torre Nuova.

Great lists were prepared on the Piazza of St. Peter's; the

streets about it were barricaded, and the windows of the surrounding houses served as boxes for the spectators. The pope and his court took their places on the balconies of the Vatican.

The fête was started by professional toreadors: after they had exhibited their strength and skill, Alfonso and Cæsar in their turn descended to the arena, and to offer a proof of their mutual kindness, settled that the bull which pursued Cæsar should be killed by Alfonso, and the bull that pursued Alfonso by Cæsar.

Then Cæsar remained alone on horseback within the lists, Alfonso going out by an improvised door which was kept ajar, in order that he might go back on the instant if he judged that his presence was necessary. At the same time, from the opposite side of the lists the bull was introduced, and was at the same moment pierced all over with darts and arrows, some of them containing explosives, which took fire, and irritated the bull to such a point that he rolled about with pain, and then got up in a fury, and perceiving a man on horseback, rushed instantly upon him. It was now, in this narrow arena, pursued by his swift enemy, that Cæsar displayed all that skill which made him one of the finest horsemen of the period. Still, clever as he was, he could not have remained safe long in that restricted area from an adversary against whom he had no other resource than flight, had not Alfonso appeared suddenly, just when the bull was beginning to gain upon him, waving a red cloak in his left hand, and holding in his right a long delicate Aragon sword. It was high time: the bull was only a few paces distant from Cæsar, and the risk he was running appeared so imminent that a woman's scream was heard from one of the windows. But at the sight of a man on foot the bull stopped short, and judging that he would do better business with the new enemy than the old one, he turned upon him instead. For a moment he stood motionless, roaring, kicking up the dust with his hind feet, and lashing his sides with his tail. Then he rushed upon Alfonso, his eyes all bloodshot, his horns tearing up the ground. Alfonso awaited him with a tranquil air; then, when he was only three paces away, he made a bound to one side, and presented instead of his body his sword, which dis-

appeared at once to the hilt; the bull, checked in the middle of his onslaught, stopped one instant motionless and trembling, then fell upon his knees, uttered one dull roar, and lying down on the very spot where his course had been checked, breathed his last without moving a single step forward.

Applause resounded on all sides, so rapid and clever had been the blow. Cæsar had remained on horseback, seeking to discover the fair spectator who had given so lively a proof of her interest in him, without troubling himself about what was going on: his search had not been unrewarded, for he had recognised one of the maids of honour to Elizabeth, Duchess of Urbino, who was betrothed to Gian Battista Carraciuolo, captain-general of the republic of Venice.

It was now Alfonso's turn to run from the bull, Cæsar's to fight him: the young men changed parts, and when four mules had reluctantly dragged the dead bull from the arena, and the valets and other servants of His Holiness had scattered sand over the places that were stained with blood, Alfonso mounted a magnificent Andalusian steed of Arab origin, light as the wind of Sahara that had wedded with his mother, while Cæsar, dismounting, retired in his turn, to reappear at the moment when Alfonso should be meeting the same danger from which he had just now rescued him.

Then a second bull was introduced upon the scene, excited in the same manner with steeled darts and flaming arrows. Like his predecessor, when he perceived a man on horseback he rushed upon him, and then began a marvellous race, in which it was impossible to see, so quickly did they fly over the ground, whether the horse was pursuing the bull or the bull the horse. But after five or six rounds, the bull began to gain upon the son of Araby, for all his speed, and it was plain to see who fled and who pursued; in another moment there was only the length of two lances between them, and then suddenly Cæsar appeared, armed with one of those long two-handed swords which the French are accustomed to use, and just when the bull, almost close upon Don Alfonso, came in front of Cæsar he brandished the sword, which flashed like lightning, and cut off his head,

while his body, impelled by the speed of the run, fell to the ground ten paces farther on. This blow was so unexpected, and had been performed with such dexterity, that it was received not with mere clapping but with wild enthusiasm and frantic outcry. Cæsar, apparently remembering nothing else in his hour of triumph but the scream that had been caused by his former danger, picked up the bull's head, and, giving it to one of his equerries, ordered him to lay it as an act of homage at the feet of the fair Venetian who had bestowed upon him so lively a sign of interest. This fête, besides affording a triumph to each of the young men, had another end as well; it was meant to prove to the populace that perfect goodwill existed between the two, since each had saved the life of the other. The result was that, if any accident should happen to Cæsar, nobody would dream of accusing Alfonso; and also if any accident should happen to Alfonso, nobody would dream of accusing Cæsar.

There was a supper at the Vatican. Alfonso made an elegant toilet, and about ten o'clock at night prepared to go from the quarters he inhabited into those where the pope lived; but the door which separated the two courts of the building was shut, and knock as he would, no one came to open it. Alfonso then thought that it was a simple matter for him to go round by the Piazza of St. Peter's; so he went out unaccompanied through one of the garden gates of the Vatican and made his way across the gloomy streets which led to the stairway which gave on the piazza. But scarcely had he set his foot on the first step when he was attacked by a band of armed men. Alfonso would have drawn his sword; but before it was out of the scabbard he had received two blows from a halberd, one on his head, the other on his shoulder; he was stabbed in the side, and wounded both in the leg and in the temple. Struck down by these five blows, he lost his footing and fell to the ground unconscious; his assassins, supposing he was dead, at once remounted the stairway, and found on the piazza forty horsemen waiting for them: by them they were calmly escorted from the city by the Porta Portesa. Alfonso was found at the point of death, but not actually dead, by some

passers-by, some of whom recognised him, and instantly conveyed the news of his assassination to the Vatican, while the others, lifting the wounded man in their arms, carried him to his quarters in the Torre Nuova. The pope and Cæsar, who learned this news just as they were sitting down to table, showed great distress, and leaving their companions, at once went to see Alfonso, to be quite certain whether his wounds were fatal or not; and on the next morning, to divert any suspicion that might be turned towards themselves, they arrested Alfonso's maternal uncle, Francesco Gazella, who had come to Rome in his nephew's company. Gazella was found guilty on the evidence of false witnesses, and was consequently beheaded.

But they had only accomplished half of what they wanted. By some means, fair or foul, suspicion had been sufficiently diverted from the true assassins; but Alfonso was not dead, and, thanks to the strength of his constitution and the skill of his doctors, who had taken the lamentations of the pope and Cæsar quite seriously, and thought to please them by curing Alexander's son-in-law, the wounded man was making progress towards convalescence: news arrived at the same time that Lucrezia had heard of her husband's accident, and was starting to come and nurse him herself. There was no time to lose, and Cæsar summoned Michelotto.

"The same night," says Burcardus, "Don Alfonso, who would not die of his wounds, was found strangled in his bed."

The funeral took place the next day with a ceremony not unbecoming in itself, though unsuited to his high rank. Don Francesco Borgia, Archbishop of Cosenza, acted as chief mourner at St. Peter's, where the body was buried in the chapel of Santa Maria delle Febbre.

Lucrezia arrived the same evening: she knew her father and brother too well to be put on the wrong scent; and although, immediately after Alfonso's death, the Duke of Valentinois had arrested the doctors, the surgeons, and a poor deformed wretch who had been acting as valet, she knew perfectly well from what quarter the blow had proceeded. In fear, therefore, that the manifestation of a grief she felt this time too well might

alienate the confidence of her father and brother, she retired to Nepi with her whole household, her whole court, and more than six hundred cavaliers, there to spend the period of her mourning.

This important family business was now settled, and Lucrezia was again a widow, and in consequence ready to be utilised in the pope's new political machinations. Cæsar only stayed at Rome to receive the ambassadors from France and Venice; but as their arrival was somewhat delayed, and considerable inroads had been made upon the pope's treasury by the recent festivities, the creation of twelve new cardinals was arranged: this scheme was to have two effects, viz., to bring 600,000 ducats into the pontifical chest, each hat having been priced at 50,000 ducats, and to assure the pope of a constant majority in the sacred council.

The ambassadors at last arrived: the first was M. de Villeneuve, the same who had come before to see the Duke of Valentinois in the name of France. Just as he entered Rome, he met on the road a masked man, who, without removing his domino, expressed the joy he felt at his arrival. This man was Cæsar himself, who did not wish to be recognised, and who took his departure after a short conference without uncovering his face. M. de Villeneuve then entered the city after him, and at the Porta del Popolo found the ambassadors of the various Powers, and among them those of Spain and Naples, whose sovereigns were not yet, it is true, in declared hostility to France, though there was already some coolness. The last-named, fearing to compromise themselves, merely said to their colleague of France, by way of complimentary address, "Sir, you are welcome"; whereupon the master of the ceremonies, surprised at the brevity of the greeting, asked if they had nothing else to say. When they replied that they had not, M. de Villeneuve turned his back upon them, remarking that those who had nothing to say required no answer: he then took his place between the Archbishop of Reggio, governor of Rome, and the Archbishop of Ragusa, and made his way to the palace of the Holy Apostles, which had been got ready for his reception.

Some days later, Maria Giorgi, ambassador extraordinary of Venice, made his arrival. He was commissioned not only to arrange the business on hand with the pope, but also to convey to Alexander and Cæsar the title of Venetian nobles, and to inform them that their names were inscribed in the Golden Book—a favour that both of them had long coveted, less for the empty honour's sake than for the new influence that this title might confer. Then the pope went on to bestow the twelve cardinals' hats that had been sold. The new princes of the Church were Don Diego de Mendoza, archbishop of Seville; Jacques, archbishop of Oristagny, the Pope's vicar-general; Thomas, archbishop of Strigonia; Piero, archbishop of Reggio, governor of Rome; Francesco Borgia, archbishop of Cosenza, treasurer-general; Gian, archbishop of Salerno, vice-chamberlain; Luigi Borgia, archbishop of Valencia, secretary to His Holiness, and brother of the Gian Borgia whom Cæsar had poisoned; Antonio, bishop of Como; Gian Battista Ferraro, bishop of Modena; Amédée d'Albret, son of the King of Navarre, brother-in-law of the Duke of Valentinois; and Marco Cornaro, a Venetian noble, in whose person His Holiness rendered back to the most serene republic the favour he had just received.

Then, as there was nothing further to detain the Duke of Valentinois at Rome, he only waited to effect a loan from a rich banker named Agostino Chigi, brother of the Lorenzo Chigi who had perished on the day when the pope had been nearly killed by the fall of a chimney, and departed for the Romagna, accompanied by Vitellozzo Vitelli, Gian Paolo Baglione, and Jacopo di Santa Croce, at that time his friends, but later on his victims.

His first enterprise was against Pesaro: this was the polite attention of a brother-in-law, and Gian Sforza very well knew what would be its consequences; for instead of attempting to defend his possessions by taking up arms, or to venture on negotiations, unwilling moreover to expose the fair lands he had ruled so long to the vengeance of an irritated foe, he begged his subjects to preserve their former affection towards

himself, in the hope of better days to come; and he fled into Dalmatia. Malatesta, lord of Rimini, followed his example; thus the Duke of Valentinois entered both these towns without striking a single blow. Cæsar left a sufficient garrison behind him, and marched on to Faenza.

But there the face of things was changed: Faenza at that time was under the rule of Astor Manfredi, a brave and handsome young man of eighteen, who, relying on the love of his subjects towards his family, had resolved on defending himself to the uttermost, although he had been forsaken by the Bentivogli, his near relatives, and by his allies, the Venetians and Florentines, who had not dared to send him any aid because of the affection felt towards Cæsar by the King of France. Accordingly, when he perceived that the Duke of Valentinois was marching against him, he assembled in hot haste all those of his vassals who were capable of bearing arms, together with the few foreign soldiers who were willing to come into his pay, and collecting victual and ammunition, he took up his position with them inside the town.

By these defensive preparations Cæsar was not greatly disconcerted; he commanded a magnificent army, composed of the finest troops of France and Italy, led by such men as Paolo and Giulio Orsini, Vitellozzo Vitelli and Paolo Baglione, not to speak of himself—that is to say, by the first captains of the period. So, after he had reconnoitred, he at once began the siege, pitching his camp between the two rivers, Amona and Marziano, placing his artillery on the side which faces on Forli, at which point the besieged party had erected a powerful bastion.

At the end of a few days busy with entrenchments, the breach became practicable, and the Duke of Valentinois ordered an assault, and gave the example to his soldiers by being the first to march against the enemy. But in spite of his courage and that of his captains beside him, Astor Manfredi made so good a defence that the besiegers were repulsed with great loss of men, while one of their bravest leaders, Honorio Savello, was left behind in the trenches.

But Faenza, in spite of the courage and devotion of her de-

fenders, could not have held out long against so formidable an army, had not winter come to her aid. Surprised by the rigour of the season, with no houses for protection and no trees for fuel, as the peasants had destroyed both beforehand, the Duke of Valentinois was forced to raise the siege and take up his winter quarters in the neighbouring towns, in order to be quite ready for a return next spring; for Cæsar could not forgive the insult of being held in check by a little town which had enjoyed a long time of peace, was governed by a mere boy, and deprived of all outside aid, and had sworn to take his revenge. He therefore broke up his army into three sections, sent one-third to Imola, the second to Forli, and himself took the third to Cesena, a third-rate town, which was thus suddenly transformed into a city of pleasure and luxury.

Indeed, for Cæsar's active spirit there must needs be no cessation of warfare or festivities. So, when war was interrupted, fêtes began, as magnificent and as exciting as he knew how to make them: the days were passed in games and displays of horsemanship, the nights in dancing and gallantry; for the loveliest women of the Romagna—and that is to say of the whole world—had come hither to make a seraglio for the victor which might have been envied by the Sultan of Egypt or the Emperor of Constantinople.

While the Duke of Valentinois was making one of his excursions in the neighbourhood of the town with his retinue of flattering nobles and titled courtesans, who were always about him, he noticed a cortège on the Rimini road so numerous that it must surely indicate the approach of someone of importance. Cæsar, soon perceiving that the principal person was a woman, approached, and recognised the very same lady-in-waiting to the Duchess of Urbino who, on the day of the bull-fight, had screamed when Cæsar was all but touched by the infuriated beast. At this time she was betrothed, as we mentioned, to Gian Carracciuolo, general of the Venetians. Elizabeth of Gonzaga, her protectress and godmother, was now sending her with a suitable retinue to Venice, where the marriage was to take place.

Cæsar had already been struck by the beauty of this young girl, when at Rome; but when he saw her again she appeared more lovely than on the first occasion, so he resolved on the instant that he would keep this fair flower of love for himself: having often before reproached himself for his indifference in passing her by. Therefore he saluted her as an old acquaintance, inquired whether she were staying any time at Cesena, and ascertained that she was only passing through, travelling by long stages, as she was awaited with much impatience, and that she would spend the coming night at Forli. This was all that Cæsar cared to know; he summoned Michelotto, and in a low voice said a few words to him which were heard by no one else.

The cortège only made a halt at the neighbouring town, as the fair bride had said, and started at once for Forli, although the day was already far advanced; but scarcely had a league been covered when a troop of horsemen from Cesena overtook and surrounded them. Although the soldiers in the escort were far from being in sufficient force, they were eager to defend their general's bride; but soon some fell dead, and others, terrified, took to flight; and when the lady came down from her litter to try to escape, the chief seized her in his arms and set her in front of him on his horse; then, ordering his men to return to Cesena without him, he put his horse to the gallop in a cross direction, and as the shades of evening were now beginning to fall, he soon disappeared into the darkness.

Carracciuolo learned the news through one of the fugitives, who declared that he had recognised among the ravishers the Duke of Valentinois' soldiers. At first he thought his ears had deceived him, so hard was it to believe this terrible intelligence; but it was repeated, and he stood for one instant motionless, and, as it were, thunderstruck; then suddenly, with a cry for vengeance, he threw off his stupor and dashed away to the ducal palace, where sat the Doge Barberigo and the Council of Ten; unannounced, he rushed into their midst, the very moment after they had heard of Cæsar's outrage.

"Most serene lords," he cried, "I am come to bid you

farewell, for I am resolved to sacrifice my life to my private vengeance, though indeed I had hoped to devote it to the service of the republic. I have been wounded in the soul's noblest part—in my honour. The dearest thing I possessed, my wife, has been stolen from me, and the thief is the most treacherous, the most impious, the most infamous of men, it is Valentinois! My lords, I beg you will not be offended if I speak thus of a man whose boast it is to be a member of your noble ranks and to enjoy your protection: it is not so; he lies, and his loose and criminal life has made him unworthy of such honours, even as he is unworthy of the life whereof my sword shall deprive him. In truth, his very birth was a sacrilege; he is a fratricide, an usurper of the goods of other men, an oppressor of the innocent, and a highway assassin; he is a man who will violate every law, even the law of hospitality respected by the veriest barbarian, a man who will do violence to a virgin who is passing through his own country, where she had every right to expect from him not only the consideration due to her sex and condition, but also that which is due to the most serene republic, whose condottiere I am, and which is insulted in my person and in the dishonouring of my bride; this man, I say, merits indeed to die by another hand than mine. Yet, since he who ought to punish him is not for him a prince and judge, but only a father quite as guilty as the son, I myself will seek him out, and I will sacrifice my own life, not only in avenging my own injury and the blood of so many innocent beings, but also in promoting the welfare of the most serene republic, on which it is his ambition to trample when he has accomplished the ruin of the other princes of Italy."

The doge and the senators, who, as we said, were already apprised of the event that had brought Carracciuolo before them, listened with great interest and profound indignation; for they, as he told them, were themselves insulted in the person of their general: they all swore, on their honour, that if he would put the matter in their hands, and not yield to his rage, which could only work his own undoing, either his bride

should be rendered up to him without a smirch upon her bridal veil, or else a punishment should be dealt out proportioned to the affront. And without delay, as a proof of the energy wherewith the noble tribunal would take action in the affair, Luigi Manenti, secretary to the Ten, was sent to Imola, where the duke was reported to be, that he might explain to him the great displeasure with which the most serene republic viewed the outrage perpetrated upon their condottiere. At the same time the Council of Ten and the doge sought out the French ambassador, entreating him to join with them and repair in person with Manenti to the Duke of Valentinois, and summon him, in the name of King Louis XII, immediately to send back to Venice the lady he had carried off.

The two messengers arrived at Imola, where they found Cæsar, who listened to their complaint with every mark of utter astonishment, denying that he had been in any way connected with the crime, nay, authorising Manenti and the French ambassador to pursue the culprits, and promising that he would himself have the most active search carried on. The duke appeared to act in such complete good faith that the envoys were for the moment hoodwinked, and themselves undertook a search of the most careful nature. They accordingly repaired to the exact spot and began to procure information. On the highroad there had been found dead and wounded. A man had been seen going by at a gallop, carrying a woman in distress on his saddle; he had soon left the beaten track and plunged across country. A peasant coming home from working in the fields had seen him appear and vanish again like a shadow, taking the direction of a lonely house. An old woman declared that she had seen him go into this house. But the next night the house was gone, as though by enchantment, and the ploughshare had passed over where it stood; so that none could say what had become of her whom they sought, for those who had dwelt in the house, and even the house itself, were there no longer.

Manenti and the French ambassador returned to Venice, and related what the duke had said, what they had done, and

how all search had been in vain. No one doubted that Cæsar was the culprit, but no one could prove it. So the most serene republic, which could not, considering their war with the Turks, be embroiled with the pope, forbade Carracciuolo to take any sort of private vengeance, and so the talk grew gradually less, and at last the occurrence was no more mentioned.

But the pleasures of the winter had not diverted Cæsar's mind from his plans about Faenza. Scarcely did the spring season allow him to go into the country than he marched anew upon the town, camped opposite the castle, and making a new breach, ordered a general assault, himself going up first of all; but in spite of the courage he personally displayed, and the able seconding of his soldiers, they were repulsed by Astor, who at the head of his men defended the breach, while even the women, at the top of the rampart, rolled down stones and trunks of trees upon the besiegers. After an hour's struggle man to man, Cæsar was forced to retire, leaving two thousand men in the trenches about the town, and among the two thousand one of his bravest condottieri, Valentino Farnese.

Then, seeing that neither excommunications nor assaults could help him, Cæsar converted the siege into a blockade: all the roads leading to Faenza were cut off, all communications stopped; and further, as various signs of revolt had been remarked at Cesena, a governor was installed there whose powerful will was well known to Cæsar, Ramiro d'Orco, with powers of life and death over the inhabitants; he then waited quietly before Faenza, till hunger should drive out the citizens from those walls they defended with such vehement enthusiasm. At the end of a month, during which the people of Faenza had suffered all the horrors of famine, delegates came out to parley with Cæsar with a view to capitulation. Cæsar, who still had plenty to do in the Romagna, was less hard to satisfy than might have been expected, and the town yielded on condition that he should not touch either the persons or the belongings of the inhabitants, that Astor Manfredi, the youthful ruler, should have the privilege of retiring wherever he pleased, and should enjoy the revenue of his patrimony wherever he might be.

The conditions were faithfully kept so far as the inhabitants were concerned; but Cæsar, when he had seen Astor, whom he did not know before, was seized by a strange passion for this beautiful youth, who was like a woman: he kept him by his side in his own army, showing him honours befitting a young prince, and evincing before the eyes of all the strongest affection for him: one day Astor disappeared, just as Carracciuolo's bride had disappeared, and no one knew what had become of him; Cæsar himself appeared very uneasy, saying that he had no doubt made his escape somewhere, and in order to give credence to this story, he sent out couriers to seek him in all directions.

A year after this double disappearance, there was picked up in the Tiber, a little below the Castle Sant' Angelo, the body of a beautiful young woman, her hands bound together behind her back, and also the corpse of a handsome youth with the bowstring he had been strangled with tied round his neck. The girl was Carracciuolo's bride, the young man was Astor.

During the last year both had been the slaves of Cæsar's pleasures; now, tired of them, he had had them thrown into the Tiber.

The capture of Faenza had brought Cæsar the title of Duke of Romagna, which was first bestowed on him by the pope in full consistory, and afterwards ratified by the King of Hungary, the republic of Venice, and the Kings of Castile and Portugal. The news of the ratification arrived at Rome on the eve of the day on which the people are accustomed to keep the anniversary of the foundation of the Eternal City; this fête, which went back to the days of Pomponius Lætus, acquired a new splendour in their eyes from the joyful events that had just happened to their sovereign. As a sign of joy cannon were fired all day long; in the evening there were illuminations and bonfires, and during part of the night the Prince of Squillace, with the chief lords of the Roman nobility, marched about the streets, bearing torches, and exclaiming, "Long live Alexander! Long live Cæsar! Long live the Borgias! Long live the Orsini! Long live the Duke of Romagna!"

CHAPTER XII

CÆSAR'S ambitition was only fed by victories: scarcely was he master of Faenza before, excited by the Mariscotti, old enemies of the Bentivogli family, he cast his eyes upon Bologna; but Gian di Bentivoglio, whose ancestors had possessed this town from time immemorial, had not only made all preparations necessary for a long resistance, but he had also put himself under the protection of France; so, scarcely had he learned that Cæsar was crossing the frontier of the Bolognese territory with his army, than he sent a courier to Louis XII to claim the fulfilment of his promise. Louis kept it with his accustomed good faith; and when Cæsar arrived before Bologna, he received an intimation from the King of France that he was not to enter on any undertaking against his ally Bentivoglio; Cæsar not being the man to have his plans upset for nothing, he made conditions for his retreat, to which Bentivoglio consented, only too happy to be quit of him at this price: the conditions were the cession of Castello Bolognese, a fortress between Imola and Faenza, the payment of a tribute of 9000 ducats, and the keeping for his service of a hundred men-at-arms and two thousand infantry. In exchange for these favours, Cæsar confided to Bentivoglio that his visit had been due to the counsels of the Mariscotti; then, reinforced by his new ally's contingent, he took the road for Tuscany. But he was scarcely out of sight when Bentivoglio shut the gates of Bologna, and commanded his son Hermes to assassinate with his own hand Agamemnon Mariscotti, the head of the family, and ordered the massacre of four-and-thirty of his near relatives, brothers, sons, daughters, and nephews, and two hundred

other of his kindred and friends. The butchery was carried out by the noblest youths of Bologna, whom Bentivoglio forced to bathe their hands in this blood, so that he might attach them to himself through their fear of reprisals.

Cæsar's plans with regard to Florence were now no longer a mystery: since the month of January he had sent to Pisa ten or twelve hundred men under the command of Regniero della Sassetta and Piero di Gamba Corti, and as soon as the conquest of the Romagna was complete, he had further despatched Oliverotto di Fermo with new detachments. His own army he had reinforced, as we have seen, by a hundred men-at-arms and two thousand infantry; he had just been joined by Vitellozzo Vitelli, lord of Città di Castello, and by the Orsini, who had brought him another two or three thousand men; so, without counting the troops sent to Pisa, he had under his control seven hundred men-at-arms and five thousand infantry.

Still, in spite of this formidable company, he entered Tuscany declaring that his intentions were only pacific, protesting that he only desired to pass through the territories of the republic on his way to Rome, and offering to pay in ready money for any victual his army might require. But when he had passed the defiles of the mountains and arrived at Barberino, feeling that the town was in his power and nothing could now hinder his approach, he began to put a price on the friendship he had at first offered freely, and to impose his own conditions instead of accepting those of others. These were that Piero dei Medici, kinsman and ally of the Orsini, should be reinstated in his ancient power; that six Florentine citizens, to be chosen by Vitellozzo, should be put into his hands that they might by their death expiate that of Paolo Vitelli, unjustly executed by the Florentines; that the Signoria should engage to give no aid to the lord of Piombino, whom Cæsar intended to dispossess of his estates without delay; and further, that he himself should be taken into the service of the republic, for a pay proportionate to his deserts. But just as Cæsar had reached this point in his negotiations with Florence, he received orders from Louis XII

to get ready, so soon as he conveniently could, to follow him with his army and help in the conquest of Naples, which he was at last in a position to undertake. Cæsar dared not break his word to so powerful an ally; he therefore replied that he was at the king's orders, and as the Florentines were not aware that he was quitting them on compulsion, he sold his retreat for the sum of 36,000 ducats per annum, in exchange for which sum he was to hold three hundred men-at-arms always in readiness to go to the aid of the republic at her earliest call and in any circumstances of need.

But, hurried as he was, Cæsar still hoped that he might find time to conquer the territory of Piombino as he went by, and take the capital by a single vigorous stroke; so he made his entry into the lands of Jacopo IV of Appiano. The latter, he found, however, had been beforehand with him, and, to rob him of all resource, had laid waste his own country, burned his fodder, felled his trees, torn down his vines, and destroyed a few fountains that produced salubrious waters. This did not hinder Cæsar from seizing in the space of a few days Severeto, Scarlino, the isle of Elba, and La Pianosa; but he was obliged to stop short at the castle, which opposed a serious resistance. As Louis XII's army was continuing its way towards Rome, and he received a fresh order to join it, he took his departure the next day, leaving behind him Vitellozzo and Gian Paolo Baglioni to prosecute the siege in his absence.

Louis XII was this time advancing upon Naples, not with the incautious ardour of Charles VIII, but, on the contrary, with that prudence and circumspection which characterised him. Besides his alliance with Florence and Rome, he had also signed a secret treaty with Ferdinand the Catholic, who had similar pretensions, through the house of Duras, to the throne of Naples to those Louis himself had through the house of Anjou. By this treaty the two kings were sharing their conquests beforehand: Louis would be master of Naples, of the town of Lavore and the Abruzzi, and would bear the title of King of Naples and Jerusalem; Ferdinand reserved for his own share Apulia and Calabria, with the title of Duke of these provinces; both were

to receive the investiture from the pope and to hold them of him. This partition was all the more likely to be made, in fact, because Frederic, supposing all the time that Ferdinand was his good and faithful friend, would open the gates of his towns, only to receive into his fortresses conquerors and masters instead of allies. All this perhaps was not very loyal conduct on the part of a king who had so long desired and had just now received the surname of Catholic, but it mattered little to Louis, who profited by treasonable acts he did not have to share.

The French army, which the Duke of Valentinois had just joined, consisted of 1000 lances, 4000 Swiss, and 6000 Gascons and adventurers; further, Philip of Rabenstein was bringing by sea six Breton and Provençal vessels, and three Genoese caracks, carrying 6500 invaders.

Against this mighty host the King of Naples had only 700 men-at-arms, 600 light horse, and 6000 infantry under the command of the Colonna, whom he had taken into his pay after they were exiled by the pope from the States of the Church; but he was counting on Gonsalvo of Cordova, who was to join him at Gaeta, and to whom he had confidingly opened all his fortresses in Calabria.

But the feeling of safety inspired by Frederic's faithless ally was not destined to endure long: on their arrival at Rome, the French and Spanish ambassadors presented to the pope the treaty signed at Grenada on the 11th of November 1500, between Louis XII and Ferdinand the Catholic, a treaty which up to that time had been secret. Alexander, foreseeing the probable future, had, by the death of Alfonso, loosened all the bonds that attached him to the house of Aragon, and then began by making some difficulty about it. It was demonstrated that the arrangement had only been undertaken to provide the Christian princes with another weapon for attacking the Ottoman Empire, and before this consideration, one may readily suppose, all the pope's scruples vanished; on the 25th of June, therefore, it was decided to call a consistory which was to declare Frederic deposed from the throne of Naples. When Frederic heard all at once that the French army had arrived at Rome, that his ally

Ferdinand had deceived him, and that Alexander had pronounced the sentence of his downfall, he understood that all was lost; but he did not wish it to be said that he had abandoned his kingdom without even attempting to save it. So he charged his two new condottieri, Fabrizio Colonna and Ranuzio di Marciano, to check the French before Capua with 300 men-at-arms, some light horse, and 3000 infantry; in person he occupied Aversa with another division of his army, while Prospero Colonna was set to defend Naples with the rest, and make a stand against the Spaniards on the side of Calabria.

These dispositions were scarcely made when d'Aubigny, having passed the Volturno, approached to lay siege to Capua, and invested the town on both sides of the river. Scarcely were the French encamped before the ramparts than they began to set up their batteries, which were soon in play, much to the terror of the besieged, who, poor creatures, were almost all strangers to the town, and had fled thither from every side, expecting to find protection beneath the walls. So, although bravely repulsed by Fabrizio Colonna, the French, from the moment of their first assault, inspired so great and blind a terror that everyone began to talk of opening the gates, and it was only with great difficulty that Colonna made this multitude understand that at least they ought to reap some benefit from the check the besiegers had received and obtain good terms of capitulation. When he had brought them round to his view, he sent out to demand a parley with d'Aubigny, and a conference was fixed for the next day but one, in which they were to treat of the surrender of the town.

But this was not Cæsar Borgia's idea at all: he had stayed behind to confer with the pope, and had joined the French army with some of his troops on the very day on which the conference had been arranged for two days later: and a capitulation of any nature would rob him of his share of the booty and the promise of such pleasure as would come from the capture of a city so rich and populous as Capua. So he opened up negotiations on his own account with a captain who was on guard at one of the gates: such negotiations, made with cunning supported by bribery, proved as usual more prompt and efficacious than any

others. At the very moment when Fabrizio Colonna in a fortified outpost was discussing the conditions of capitulation with the French captains, suddenly great cries of distress were heard. These were caused by Borgia, who without a word to anyone had entered the town with his faithful army from Romagna, and was beginning to cut the throats of the garrison, which had naturally somewhat relaxed their vigilance in the belief that the capitulation was all but signed. The French, when they saw that the town was half taken, rushed on the gates with such impetuosity that the besieged did not even attempt to defend themselves any longer, and forced their way into Capua by three separate sides: nothing more could be done then to stop the issue. Butchery and pillage had begun, and the work of destruction must needs be completed: in vain did Fabrizio Colonna, Ranuzio di Marciano, and Don Ugo di Cardona attempt to make head against the French and Spaniards with such men as they could get together. Fabrizio Colonna and Don Ugo were made prisoners; Ranuzio, wounded by an arrow, fell into the hands of the Duke of Valentinois; seven thousand inhabitants were massacred in the streets, among them the traitor who had given up the gate; the churches were pillaged, the convents of nuns forced open; and then might be seen the spectacle of some of these holy virgins casting themselve into pits or into the river to escape the soldiers. Three hundred of the noblest ladies of the town took refuge in a tower. The Duke of Valentinois broke in the doors, chose out for himself forty of the most beautiful, and handed over the rest to his army.

The pillage continued for three days.

Capua once taken, Frederic saw that it was useless any longer to attempt defence. So he shut himself up in Castel Nuovo and gave permission to Gaeta and to Naples to treat with the conqueror. Gaeta bought immunity from pillage with 60,000 ducats, and Naples with the surrender of the castle. This surrender was made to d'Aubigny by Frederic himself, on condition that he should be allowed to take to the island of Ischia his money, jewels, and furniture, and there remain with his family for six months secure from all hostile attack. The

terms of this capitulation were faithfully adhered to on both sides: d'Aubigny entered Naples, and Frederic retired to Ischia.

Thus, by a last terrible blow, never to rise again, fell this branch of the house of Aragon, which had now reigned for sixty-five years. Frederic, its head, demanded and obtained a safe-conduct to pass into France, where Louis XII gave him the duchy of Anjou and 30,000 ducats a year, on condition that he should never quit the kingdom; and there, in fact, he died, on the 9th of September 1504. His eldest son, Don Ferdinand, Duke of Calabria, retired to Spain, where he was permitted to marry twice, but each time with a woman who was known to be barren; and there he died in 1550. Alfonso, the second son, who had followed his father to France, died, it is said, of poison, at Grenoble, at the age of twenty-two; lastly Cæsar, the third son, died at Ferrara, before he had attained his eighteenth birthday.

Frederic's daughter Charlotte married in France Nicholas, Count of Laval, governor and admiral of Brittany; a daughter was born of this marriage, Anne de Laval, who married François de la Trimouille. Through her those rights were transmitted to the house of La Trimouille which were used later on as a claim upon the kingdom of the Two Sicilies.

The capture of Naples gave the Duke of Valentinois his liberty again; so he left the French army, after he had received fresh assurances on his own account of the king's friendliness, and returned to the siege of Piombino, which he had been forced to interrupt. During this interval Alexander had been visiting the scenes of his son's conquests, and traversing all the Romagna with Lucrezia, who now consoled for her husband's death, and had never before enjoyed quite so much favour with His Holiness; so, when she returned to Rome, she no longer had separate rooms from him. The result of this recrudescence of affection was the appearance of two pontifical bulls, converting the towns of Nepi and Sermoneta into duchies: one was bestowed on Gian Borgia, an illegitimate child of the pope, who was not the son of either of his mistresses, Rosa Vanozza or Giulia Farnese, the

other on Don Roderigo of Aragon, son of Lucrezia and Afonso: the lands of the Colonna were in appanage to the two duchies.

But Alexander was dreaming of yet another addition to his fortune; this was to come from a marriage between Lucrezia and Don Alfonso d'Este, son of Duke Hercules of Ferrara, in favour of which alliance Louis XII had negotiated.

His Holiness was now having a run of good fortune, and he learned on the same day that Piombino was taken and that Duke Hercules had given the King of France his assent to the marriage. Both of these pieces of news were good for Alexander, but the one could not compare in importance with the other; and the intimation that Lucrezia was to marry the heir presumptive to the duchy of Ferrara was received with a joy so great that it smacked of the humble beginnings of the Borgian house. The Duke of Valentinois was invited to return to Rome, to take his share in the family rejoicing, and on the day when the news was made public the governor of St. Angelo received orders that cannon should be fired every quarter of an hour from noon to midnight. At two o'clock, Lucrezia, attired as a *fiancée*, and accompanied by her two brothers, the Dukes of Valentinois and Squillace, issued from the Vatican, followed by all the nobility of Rome, and proceeded to the church of the Madonna del Popolo, where the Duke of Gandia and Cardinal Gian Borgia were buried, to render thanks for this new favour accorded to her house by God; and in the evening, accompanied by the same cavalcade, which shone the more brightly under the torchlight and brilliant illuminations, she made procession through the whole town, greeted by cries of "Long live Pope Alexander VI! Long live the Duchess of Ferrara!" which were shouted aloud by heralds clad in cloth of gold.

The next day an announcement was made in the town that a racecourse for women was opened between the castle of Sant' Angelo and the Piazza of St. Peter's; that on every third day there would be a bull-fight in the Spanish fashion; and that from the end of the present month, which was October,

until the first day of Lent, masquerades would be permitted in the streets of Rome.

Such was the nature of the fêtes outside; the programme of those going on within the Vatican was not presented to the people; for by the account of Bucciardo, an eye-witness, this is what happened:—

"On the last Sunday of the month of October, fifty courtesans supped in the apostolic palace in the Duke of Valentinois' rooms, and after supper danced with the equerries and servants, first wearing their usual garments, afterwards without a vestige of clothing; when supper was over, the table was removed, candlesticks were set on the floor in a symmetrical pattern, and a great quantity of chestnuts was scattered on the ground: these the fifty women, still naked, picked up, running about on all fours, in and out between the burning lights; the pope, the Duke of Valentinois, and his sister Lucrezia, who were looking on at this spectacle from a gallery, encouraged the most agile and industrious with their applause, and they received prizes of embroidered garters, velvet boots, golden caps, and laces; then new pleasures took the place of these, and"

. . . . . .

We must humbly ask forgiveness of our readers, and especially of our lady readers; but though we have found words to describe the first part of the spectacle, we have sought them in vain for the second; suffice it to say that just as there had been prizes for feats of adroitness, others were given now for sensuality and vice.

Some days after this strange night, which calls to mind the Roman evenings in the days of Tiberius, Nero, and Heliogabalus, Lucrezia, clad in a robe of golden brocade, her train carried by young girls dressed in white and crowned with roses, issued from her palace to the sound of trumpets and clarions, and made her way over carpets that were laid down in the streets through which she had to pass. Accompanied by the noblest cavaliers and the loveliest women in Rome, she betook herself to the Vatican, where in the Pauline hall the

pope awaited her, with the Duke of Valentinois, Don Ferdinand, acting as proxy for Duke Alfonso, and his cousin, Cardinal d'Este. The pope sat on one side of the table, while the envoys from Ferrara stood on the other: into their midst came Lucrezia, and Don Ferdinand placed on her finger the nuptial ring; this ceremony over, Cardinal d'Este approached and presented to the bride four magnificent rings set with precious stones; then a casket was placed on the table, richly inlaid with ivory, whence the cardinal drew forth a great many trinkets, chains, necklaces of pearls and diamonds, of workmanship as costly as their material; these he also begged Lucrezia to accept, before she received those the bridegroom was hoping to offer himself, which would be more worthy of her. Lucrezia showed the utmost delight in accepting these gifts; then she retired into the next room, leaning on the pope's arm, and followed by the ladies of her suite, leaving the Duke of Valentinois to do the honours of the Vatican to the men. That evening the guests met again, and spent half the night in dancing, while a magnificent display of fireworks lighted up the Piazzo of San Paolo.

The ceremony of betrothal over, the pope and the Duke busied themselves with making preparations for the departure. The pope, who wished the journey to be made with a great degree of splendour, sent in his daughter's company, in addition to the two brothers-in-law and the gentlemen in their suite, the Senate of Rome and all the lords who, by virtue of their wealth, could display most magnificence in their costumes and liveries. Among this brilliant throng might be seen Olivero and Ramiro Mattei, sons of Piero Mattei, chancellor of the town, and a daughter of the pope whose mother was not Rosa Vanozza; besides these, the pope nominated in consistory Francesco Borgia, Cardinal of Cosenza, legate *a latere*, to accompany his daughter to the frontiers of the Ecclesiastical States.

Also the Duke of Valentinois sent out messengers into all the cities of Romagna to order that Lucrezia should be received as sovereign lady and mistress: grand preparations were at once set on foot for the fulfilment of his orders. But the messengers

reported that they greatly feared that there would be some grumbling at Cesena, where it will be remembered that Cæsar had left Ramiro d'Orco as governor with plenary powers, to calm the agitation of the town. Now Ramiro d'Orco had accomplished his task so well that there was nothing more to fear in the way of rebellion; for one-sixth of the inhabitants had perished on the scaffold, and the result of this situation was that it was improbable that the same demonstrations of joy could be expected from a town plunged in mourning that were looked for from Imola, Faenza, and Pesaro. The Duke of Valentinois averted this inconvenience in the prompt and efficacious fashion characteristic of him alone. One morning the inhabitants of Cesena awoke to find a scaffold set up in the square, and upon it the four quarters of a man, his head, severed from the trunk, stuck up on the end of a pike.

This man was Ramiro d'Orco.

No one ever knew by whose hands the scaffold had been raised by night, nor by what executioners the terrible deed had been carried out; but when the Florentine Republic sent to ask Macchiavelli, their ambassador at Cesena, what he thought of it, he replied:—

"MAGNIFICENT LORDS,—I can tell you nothing concerning the execution of Ramiro d'Orco, except that Cæsar Borgia is the prince who best knows how to make and unmake men according to their deserts. NICCOLO MACCHIAVELLI."

The Duke of Valentinois was not disappointed, and the future Duchess of Ferrara was admirably received in every town along her route, and particularly at Cesena.

While Lucrezia was on her way to Ferrara to meet her fourth husband, Alexander and the Duke of Valentinois resolved to make a progress in the region of their last conquest, the duchy of Piombino. The apparent object of this journey was that the new subjects might take their oath to Cæsar, and the real object was to form an arsenal in Jacopo Appiano's capital within reach of Tuscany, a plan which neither the pope nor

his son had ever seriously abandoned. The two accordingly started from the port of Corneto with six ships, accompanied by a great number of cardinals and prelates, and arrived the same evening at Piombino. The pontifical court made a stay there of several days, partly with a view of making the duke known to the inhabitants, and also in order to be present at certain ecclesiastical functions, of which the most important was a service held on the third Sunday in Lent, in which the Cardinal of Cosenza sang a mass and the pope officiated in state with the duke and the cardinals. After these solemn functions the customary pleasures followed, and the pope summoned the prettiest girls of the country and ordered them to dance their national dances before him.

Following on these dances came feasts of unheard-of magnificence, during which the pope in the sight of all men completely ignored Lent and did not fast. The object of all these fêtes was to scatter abroad a great deal of money, and so to make the Duke of Valentinois popular, while poor Jacopo d'Appiano was forgotten.

When they left Piombino, the pope and his son visited the island of Elba, where they only stayed long enough to visit the old fortifications and issue orders for the building of new ones.

Then the illustrious travellers embarked on their return journey to Rome; but scarcely had they put out to sea when the weather became adverse, and the pope not wishing to put in at Porto Ferrajo, they remained five days on board, though they had only two days' provisions. During the last three days the pope lived on fried fish that were caught under great difficulties because of the heavy weather. At last they arrived in sight of Corneto, and there the duke, who was not on the same vessel as the pope, seeing that his ship could not get in, had a boat put out, and so was taken ashore. The pope was obliged to continue on his way towards Pontercole, where at last he arrived, after encountering so violent a tempest that all who were with him were utterly subdued either by sickness or by the terror of death. The pope alone did not show one instant's fear, but remained on the bridge during

the storm, sitting on his arm-chair, invoking the name of Jesus and making the sign of the cross. At last his ship entered the roads of Pontercole, where he landed, and after sending to Corneto to fetch horses, he rejoined the duke, who was there awaiting him. They then returned by slow stages, by way of Cività Vecchia and Palo, and reached Rome after an absence of a month. Almost at the same time d'Albret arrived in quest of his cardinal's hat. He was accompanied by two princes of the house of Navarre, who were received with not only those honours which beseemed their rank, but also as brothers-in-law to whom the duke was eager to show in what spirit he was contracting this alliance.

CHAPTER XIII

THE time had now come for the Duke of Valentinois to continue the pursuit of his conquests. So, since on the 1st of May in the preceding year the pope had pronounced sentence of forfeiture in full consistory against Julius Cæsar of Varano, as punishment for the murder of his brother Rudolph and for the harbouring of the pope's enemies, and he had accordingly been mulcted of his fief of Camerino, which was to be handed over to the apostolic chamber, Cæsar left Rome to put the sentence in execution. Consequently, when he arrived on the frontiers of Perugia, which belonged to his lieutenant, Gian Paolo Baglioni, he sent Oliverotto da Fermo and Orsini of Gravina to lay waste the March of Camerino, at the same time petitioning Guido d'Ubaldo di Montefeltro, Duke of Urbino, to lend his soldiers and artillery to help him in this enterprise. This the unlucky Duke of Urbino, who enjoyed the best possible relations with the pope, and who had no reason for distrusting Cæsar, did not dare refuse. But on the very same day that the Duke of Urbino's troops started for Camerino, Cæsar's troops entered the duchy of Urbino, and took possession of Cagli, one of the four towns of the little State. The Duke of Urbino knew what awaited him if he tried to resist, and fled incontinently, disguised as a peasant; thus in less than eight days Cæsar was master of his whole duchy, except the fortresses of Maiolo and San Leone.

The Duke of Valentinois forthwith returned to Camerino, where the inhabitants still held out, encouraged by the presence of Julius Cæsar di Varano, their lord, and his two sons, Venantio and Hannibal; the eldest son, Gian Maria, had been sent by his father to Venice.

The presence of Cæsar was the occasion of parleying between the besiegers and besieged. A capitulation was arranged whereby Varano engaged to give up the town, on condition that he and his sons were allowed to retire safe and sound, taking with them their furniture, treasure, and carriages. But this was by no means Cæsar's intention; so, profiting by the relaxation in vigilance that had naturally come about in the garrison when the news of the capitulation had been announced, he surprised the town in the night preceding the surrender, and seized Cæsar di Varano and his two sons, who were strangled a short time after, the father at La Pergola and the sons at Pesaro, by Don Michele Correglio, who, though he had left the position of sbirro for that of a captain, every now and then returned to his first business.

Meanwhile Vitellozzo Vitelli, who had assumed the title of General of the Church, and had under him 800 men-at-arms and 3000 infantry, was following the secret instructions that he had received from Cæsar by word of mouth, and was carrying forward that system of invasion which was to encircle Florence in a network of iron, and in the end make her defence an impossibility. A worthy pupil of his master, in whose school he had learned to use in turn the cunning of a fox and the strength of a lion, he had established an understanding between himself and certain young gentlemen of Arezzo to get that town delivered into his hands. But the plot had been discovered by Guglielmo dei Pazzi, commissary of the Florentine Republic, and he had arrested two of the conspirators, whereupon the others, who were much more numerous than was supposed, had instantly dispersed about the town, summoning the citizens to arms. All the republican faction, who saw in any sort of revolution the means of subjugating Florence, joined their party, set the captives at liberty, and seized Guglielmo; then proclaiming the establishment of the ancient constitution, they besieged the citadel, whither Cosimo dei Pazzi, Bishop of Arezzo, the son of Guglielmo, had fled for refuge; he, finding himself invested on every side, sent a messenger in hot haste to Florence to ask for help.

Unfortunately for the cardinal, Vitellozzo's troops were nearer to the besiegers than were the soldiers of the most serene republic to the besieged, and instead of help—the whole army of the enemy came down upon him. This army was under the command of Vitellozzo, of Gian Paolo Baglioni, and of Fabio Orsino, and with them were the two Medici, ever ready to go wherever there was a league against Florence, and ever ready at the command of Borgia, on any conditions whatever, to re-enter the town whence they had been banished. The next day more help in the form of money and artillery arrived, sent by Pandolfo Petrucci, and on the 18th of June the citadel of Arezzo, which had received no news from Florence, was obliged to surrender.

Vitellozzo left the men of Arezzo to look after their town themselves, leaving also Fabio Orsino to garrison the citadel with a thousand men. Then profiting by the terror that had been spread throughout all this part of Italy by the successive captures of the duchy of Urbino, of Camerino, and of Arezzo, he marched upon Monte San Severino, Castiglione Aretino, Cortone, and the other towns of the valley of Chiana, which submitted one after the other almost without a struggle. When he was only ten or twelve leagues from Florence, and dared not on his own account attempt anything against her, he made known the state of affairs to the Duke of Valentinois. He, fancying the hour had come at last for striking the blow so long delayed, started off at once to deliver his answer in person to his faithful lieutenants.

But the Florentines, though they had sent no help to Guglielmo dei Pazzi, had demanded aid from Chaumont d'Amboise, governor of the Milanese, on behalf of Louis XII, not only explaining the danger they themselves were in but also Cæsar's ambitious projects, namely that after first overcoming the small principalities and then the states of the second order, he had now, it seemed, reached such a height of pride that he would attack the King of France himself. The news from Naples was disquieting; serious differences had already occurred between the Count of Armagnac and Gonzalvo di Cordova, and Louis might any day need Florence, whom he had always found loyal and faithful. He therefore resolved to check Cæsar's progress,

and not only sent him orders to advance no further step forwards, but also sent off, to give effect to his injunction, the captain Imbaut with 400 lances. The Duke of Valentinois on the frontier of Tuscany received a copy of the treaty signed between the republic and the King of France, a treaty in which the king engaged to help his ally against any enemy whatsoever, and at the same moment the formal prohibition from Louis to advance any farther. Cæsar also learned that besides the 400 lances with the captain Imbaut, which were on the road to Florence, Louis XII had as soon as he reached Asti sent off to Parma Louis de la Trimouille and 200 men-at-arms, 3000 Swiss, and a considerable train of artillery. In these two movements combined he saw hostile intentions towards himself, and turning right about face with his usual agility, he profited by the fact that he had given nothing but verbal instructions to all his lieutenants, and wrote a furious letter to Vitellozzo, reproaching him for compromising his master with a view to his own private interest, and ordering the instant surrender to the Florentines of the towns and fortresses he had taken, threatening to march down with his own troops and take them if he hesitated for a moment.

As soon as this letter was written, Cæsar departed for Milan, where Louis XII had just arrived, bringing him proof positive that he had been calumniated in the evacuation of the conquered towns. He also was entrusted with the pope's mission to renew for another eighteen months the title of legate *a latere* in France to Cardinal d'Amboise, the friend rather than the minister of Louis XII. Thus, thanks to the public proof of his innocence and the private use of his influence, Cæsar soon made his peace with the King of France.

But this was not all. It was in the nature of Cæsar's genius to divert an impending calamity that threatened his destruction so as to come out of it better than before, and he suddenly saw the advantage he might take from the pretended disobedience of his lieutenants. Already he had been disturbed now and again by their growing power, and coveted their towns, now he thought the hour had perhaps come for suppressing them also, and in the usurpation of their private possessions striking

a blow at Florence, who always escaped him at the very moment when he thought to take her. It was indeed an annoying thing to have these fortresses and towns displaying another banner than his own in the midst of the beautiful Romagna which he desired for his own kingdom. For Vitellozzo possessed Città di Castello, Bentivoglio Bologna, Gian Paolo Baglioni was in command of Perugia, Oliverotto had just taken Fermo, and Pandolfo Petrucci was lord of Siena; it was high time that all these returned into his own hands. The lieutenants of the Duke of Valentinois, like Alexander's, were becoming too powerful, and Borgia must inherit from them, unless he were willing to let them become his own heirs. He obtained from Louis XII three hundred lances wherewith to march against them. As soon as Vitellozzo Vitelli received Cæsar's letter he perceived that he was being sacrificed to the fear that the King of France inspired; but he was not one of those victims who suffer their throats to be cut in the expiation of a mistake: he was a buffalo of Romagna who opposed his horns to the knife of the butcher; besides, he had the example of Varano and the Manfredi before him, and, death for death, he preferred to perish in arms.

So Vitellozzo convoked at Maggione all whose lives or lands were threatened by this new reversal of Cæsar's policy. These were Paolo Orsino, Gian Paolo Baglioni, Hermes Bentivoglio, representing his father Gian, Antonio di Venafro, the envoy of Pandolfo Petrucci, Oliverotto da Fermo, and the Duke of Urbino: the first six had everything to lose, and the last had already lost everything.

A treaty of alliance was signed between the confederates: they engaged to resist whether he attacked them severally or all together.

Cæsar learned the existence of this league by its first effects: the Duke of Urbino, who was adored by his subjects, had come with a handful of soldiers to the fortress of San Leone, and it had yielded at once. In less than a week towns and fortresses followed this example, and all the duchy was once more in the hands of the Duke of Urbino.

At the same time, each member of the confederacy openly

proclaimed his revolt against the common enemy, and took up a hostile attitude.

Cæsar was at Imola, awaiting the French troops, but with scarcely any men; so that Bentivoglio, who held part of the country, and the Duke of Urbino, who had just reconquered the rest of it, could probably have either taken him or forced him to fly and quit the Romagna, had they marched against him; all the more since the two men on whom he counted, viz., Don Ugo di Cardona, who had entered his service after Capua was taken, and Michelotto had mistaken his intention, and were all at once separated from him. He had really ordered them to fall back upon Rimini, and bring 200 light horse and 500 infantry of which they had the command; but, unaware of the urgency of his situation, at the very moment when they were attempting to surprise La Pergola and Fossombrone, they were surrounded by Orsino of Gravina and Vitellozzo. Ugo di Cardona and Michelotto defended themselves like lions; but in spite of their utmost efforts their little band was cut to pieces, and Ugo di Cardona taken prisoner, while Michelotto only escaped the same fate by lying down among the dead; when night came on, he escaped to Fano.

But even alone as he was, almost without troops at Imola, the confederates dared attempt nothing against Cæsar, whether because of the personal fear he inspired, or because in him they respected the ally of the King of France; they contented themselves with taking the towns and fortresses in the neighbourhood. Vitellozzo had retaken the fortresses of Fossombrone, Urbino, Cagli, and Aggobbio; Orsino of Gravina had reconquered Fano and the whole province; while Gian Maria de Varano, the same who by his absence had escaped being massacred with the rest of his family, had re-entered Camerino, borne in triumph by his people. Not even all this could destroy Cæsar's confidence in his own good fortune, and while he was on the one hand urging on the arrival of the French troops and calling into his pay all those gentlemen known as "broken lances," because they went about the country in parties of five or six only, and attached themselves to anyone

who wanted them, he had opened up negotiations with his enemies, certain that from that very day when he should persuade them to a conference they were undone. Indeed, Cæsar had the power of persuasion as a gift from heaven; and though they perfectly well knew his duplicity, they had no power of resisting, not so much his actual eloquence as that air of frank good-nature which Macchiavelli so greatly admired, and which indeed more than once deceived even him, wily politician as he was. In order to get Paolo Orsino to treat with him at Imola, Cæsar sent Cardinal Borgia to the confederates as a hostage; and on this Paolo Orsino hesitated no longer, and on the 25th of October 1502 arrived at Imola.

Cæsar received him as an old friend from whom one might have been estranged a few days because of some slight passing differences; he frankly avowed that all the fault was no doubt on his side, since he had contrived to alienate men who were such loyal lords and also such brave captains; but with men of their nature, he added, an honest, honourable explanation such as he would give must put everything once more *in statu quo*. To prove that it was goodwill, not fear, that brought him back to them, he showed Orsino the letters from Cardinal Amboise which announced the speedy arrival of French troops; he showed him those he had collected about him, in the wish, he declared, that they might be thoroughly convinced that what he chiefly regretted in the whole matter was not so much the loss of the distinguished captains who were the very soul of his vast enterprise, as that he had led the world to believe, in a way so fatal to his own interest, that he could for a single instant fail to recognise their merit; adding that he consequently relied upon him, Paolo Orsino, whom he had always cared for most, to bring back the confederates by a peace which would be as much for the profit of all as a war was hurtful to all, and that he was ready to sign a treaty in consonance with their wishes so long as it should not prejudice his own honour.

Orsino was the man Cæsar wanted: full of pride and confidence in himself, he was convinced of the truth of the old proverb that says, "A pope cannot reign eight days if he has both the

Colonnas and the Orsini against him." He believed, therefore, if not in Cæsar's good faith, at any rate in the necessity he must feel for making peace; accordingly he signed with him the following conventions—which only needed ratification—on the 18th of October 1502, which we reproduce here as Macchiavelli sent them to the magnificent republic of Florence.

"Agreement between the Duke of Valentinois and the Confederates.

"Let it be known to the parties mentioned below, and to all who shall see these presents, that His Excellency the Duke of Romagna of the one part and the Orsini of the other part, together with their confederates, desiring to put an end to differences, enmities, misunderstandings, and suspicions which have arisen between them, have resolved as follows:

"There shall be between them peace and alliance true and perpetual, with a complete obliteration of wrongs and injuries which may have taken place up to this day, both parties engaging to preserve no resentment of the same; and in conformity with the aforesaid peace and union, His Excellency the Duke of Romagna shall receive into perpetual confederation, league, and alliance all the lords aforesaid; and each of them shall promise to defend the estates of all in general and of each in particular against any power that may annoy or attack them for any cause whatsoever, excepting always nevertheless the Pope Alexander VI and his Very Christian Majesty Louis XII, King of France: the lords above named promising on the other part to unite in the defence of the person and estates of His Excellency, as also those of the most illustrious lords, Don Goffredo Borgia, Prince of Squillace, Don Roderigo Borgia, Duke of Sermoneta and Biselli, and Don Gian Borgia, Duke of Camerino and Nepi, all brothers or nephews of the Duke of Romagna.

"Moreover, since the rebellion and usurpation of Urbino have occurred during the above-mentioned misunderstandings, all the confederates aforesaid and each of them shall bind themselves to unite all their forces for the recovery of the estates aforesaid and of such other places as have revolted and been usurped.

"His Excellency the Duke of Romagna shall undertake to continue to the Orsini and Vitelli their ancient engagements in the way of military service and on the same conditions.

"His Excellency promises further not to insist on the service in person of more than one of them, as they may choose: the service that the others may render shall be voluntary.

"He also promises that the second treaty shall be ratified by the sovereign pontiff, who shall not compel Cardinal Orsino to reside in Rome longer than shall seem convenient to this prelate.

"Furthermore, since there are certain differences between the Pope and the lord Gian Bentivoglio, the confederates aforesaid agree that they shall be put to the arbitration of Cardinal Orsino, of His Excellency the Duke of Romagna, and of the lord Pandolfo Petrucci, without appeal.

"Thus the confederates engage, each and all, so soon as they may be required by the Duke of Romagna, to put into his hands as a hostage one of the legitimate sons of each of them, in that place and at that time which he may be pleased to indicate.

"The same confederates promising moreover, all and each, that if any project directed against any one of them come to their knowledge, to give warning thereof, and all to prevent such project reciprocally.

"It is agreed, over and above, between the Duke of Romagna and the confederates aforesaid, to regard as a common enemy any who shall fail to keep the present stipulations, and to unite in the destruction of any States not conforming thereto.

"(*Signed*) CÆSAR, PAOLO ORSINO,
"AGAPIT, *Secretary.*"

At the same time, while Orsino was carrying to the confederates the treaty drawn up between him and the duke, Bentivoglio, not willing to submit to the arbitration indicated, made an offer to Cæsar of settling their differences by a private treaty, and sent his son to arrange the conditions: after some parleying, they were settled as follows:—

Bentivoglio should separate his fortunes from the Vitelli and Orsini;

He should furnish the Duke of Valentinois with a hundred men-at-arms and a hundred mounted archers for eight years;

He should pay 12,000 ducats per annum to Cæsar, for the support of a hundred lances;

In return for this, his son Hannibal was to marry the sister of the Archbishop of Enna, who was Cæsar's niece, and the pope was to recognise his sovereignty in Bologna;

The King of France, the Duke of Ferrara, and the republic of Florence were to be the guarantors of this treaty.

But the convention brought to the confederates by Orsino was the cause of great difficulties on their part. Vitellozzo Vitelli in particular, who knew Cæsar the best, never ceased to tell the other condottieri that so prompt and easy a peace must needs be the cover to some trap; but since Cæsar had meanwhile collected a considerable army at Imola, and the four hundred lances lent him by Louis XII had arrived at last, Vitellozzo and Oliverotto decided to sign the treaty that Orsino brought, and to let the Duke of Urbino and the lord of Camerino know of it; they, seeing plainly that it was henceforth impossible to make a defence unaided, had retired, the one to Città di Castello and the other into the kingdom of Naples.

But Cæsar, saying nothing of his intentions, started on the 10th of December, and made his way to Cesena with a powerful army once more under his command. Fear began to spread on all sides, not only in Romagna but in the whole of Northern Italy; Florence, seeing him move away from her, only thought it a blind to conceal his intentions; while Venice, seeing him approach her frontiers, despatched all her troops to the banks of the Po. Cæsar perceived their fear, and lest harm should be done to himself by the mistrust it might inspire, he sent away all French troops in his service as soon as he reached Cesena, except a hundred men with M. de Candale, his brother-in-law; it was then seen that he only had 2000 cavalry and 2000 infantry with him. Several days were spent in parleying, for at Cesena Cæsar found the envoys of the Vitelli and Orsini, who themselves were with their army in the duchy of Urbino; but after the preliminary discussions as to the right

course to follow in carrying on the plan of conquest, there arose such difficulties between the general-in-chief and these agents, that they could not but see the impossibility of getting anything settled by intermediaries, and the urgent necessity of a conference between Cæsar and one of the chiefs. So Oliverotto ran the risk of joining the duke in order to make proposals to him, either to march on Tuscany or to take Sinigaglia, which was the only place in the duchy of Urbino that had not again fallen into Cæsar's power. Cæsar's reply was that he did not desire to war upon Tuscany, because the Tuscans were his friends; but that he approved of the lieutenants' plan with regard to Sinigaglia, and therefore was marching towards Fano.

But the daughter of Frederic, the former Duke of Urbino, who held the town of Sinigaglia, and who was called the lady-prefect, because she had married Gian della Rovere, whom his uncle, Sixtus IV, had made prefect of Rome, judging that it would be impossible to defend herself against the forces the Duke of Valentinois was bringing, left the citadel in the hands of a captain, recommending him to get the best terms he could for the town, and took boat for Venice.

Cæsar learned this news at Rimini, through a messenger from Vitelli and the Orsini, who said that the governor of the citadel, though refusing to yield to them, was quite ready to make terms with him, and consequently they would engage to go to the town and finish the business there. Cæsar's reply was that in consequence of this information he was sending some of his troops to Cesena and Imola, for they would be useless to him, as he should now have theirs, which together with the escort he retained would be sufficient, since his only object was the complete pacification of the duchy of Urbino. He added that this pacification would not be possible if his old friends continued to distrust him, and to discuss through intermediaries alone plans in which their own fortunes were interested as well as his. The messenger returned with this answer, and the confederates, though feeling, it is true, the justice of Cæsar's remarks, none the less hesitated to comply with his demand. Vitellozzo Vitelli in particular showed a want of confidence in

him which nothing seemed able to subdue; but, pressed by Oliverotto, Gravina, and Orsino, he consented at last to await the duke's coming; making concession rather because he could not bear to appear more timid than his companions, than because of any confidence he felt in the return of friendship that Borgia was displaying.

The duke learned the news of this decision, so much desired, when he arrived at Fano on the 20th of December 1502. At once he summoned eight of his most faithful friends, among whom were d'Enna, his nephew, Michelotto, and Ugo di Cardona, and ordered them, as soon as they arrived at Sinigaglia, and had seen Vitellozzo, Gravina, Oliverotto, and Orsino come out to meet him, on a pretext of doing them honour, to place themselves on the right and left hand of the four generals, two beside each, so that at a given signal they might either stab or arrest them; next he assigned to each of them his particular man, bidding them not quit his side until he had re-entered Sinigaglia and arrived at the quarters prepared for him; then he sent orders to such of the soldiers as were in cantonments in the neighbourhood to assemble to the number of 8000 on the banks of the Metaurus, a little river of Umbria which runs into the Adriatic and has been made famous by the defeat of Hasdrubal.

The duke arrived at the rendezvous given to his army on the 31st of December, and instantly sent out in front two hundred horse, and immediately behind them his infantry; following himself in the midst of his men-at-arms, following the coast of the Adriatic, with the mountains on his right and the sea on his left, which in part of the way left only space for the army to march ten abreast.

After four hours' march, the duke at a turn of the path perceived Sinigaglia, nearly a mile distant from the sea, and a bowshot from the mountains; between the army and the town ran a little river, whose banks he had to follow for some distance. At last he found a bridge opposite a suburb of the town, and here Cæsar ordered his cavalry to stop: it was drawn up in two lines, one between the road and

the river, the other on the side of the country, leaving the whole width of the road to the infantry: which latter defiled, crossed the bridge, and entering the town, drew themselves up in battle array in the great square.

On their side, Vitellozzo, Gravina, Orsino, and Oliverotto, to make room for the duke's army, had quartered their soldiers in little towns or villages in the neighbourhood of Sinigaglia; Oliverotto alone had kept nearly 1000 infantry and 150 horse, who were in barracks in the suburb through which the duke entered.

Cæsar had made only a few steps towards the town when he perceived Vitellozzo at the gate, with the Duke of Gravina and Orsino, who all came out to meet him; the last two quite gay and confident, but the first so gloomy and dejected that you would have thought he foresaw the fate that was in store for him; and doubtless he had not been without some presentiments; for when he left his army to come to Sinigaglia, he had bidden them farewell as though never to meet again, had commended the care of his family to the captains, and embraced his children with tears—a weakness which appeared strange to all who knew him as a brave condottiere.

The duke marched up to them holding out his hand, as a sign that all was over and forgotten, and did it with an air at once so loyal and so smiling that Gravina and Orsino could no longer doubt the genuine return of his friendship, and it was only Vitellozzo still appeared sad. At the same moment, exactly as they had been commanded, the duke's accomplices took their posts on the right and left of those they were to watch, who were all there except Oliverotto, whom the duke could not see, and began to seek with uneasy looks; but as he crossed the suburb he perceived him exercising his troops on the square. Cæsar at once despatched Michelotto and d'Enna, with a message that it was a rash thing to have his troops out, when they might easily start some quarrel with the duke's men and bring about an affray: it would be much better to settle them in barracks and then come to join his companions, who were with Cæsar. Oliverotto, drawn by the same fate as his

friends, made no objection, ordered his soldiers indoors, and put his horse to the gallop to join the duke, escorted on either side by d'Enna and Michelotto. Cæsar, on seeing him, called him, took him by the hand, and continued his march to the palace that had been prepared for him, his four victims following after.

Arrived on the threshold, Cæsar dismounted, and signing to the leader of the men-at-arms to await his orders, he went in first, followed by Oliverotto, Gravina, Vitellozzo Vitelli, and Orsino, each accompanied by his two satellites; but scarcely had they gone upstairs and into the first room when the door was shut behind them, and Cæsar turned round, saying, "The hour has come!" This was the signal agreed upon. Instantly the former confederates were seized, thrown down, and forced to surrender with a dagger at their throat. Then, while they were being carried to a dungeon, Cæsar opened the window, went out on the balcony and cried out to the leader of his men-at-arms, "Go forward!" The man was in the secret, he rushed on with his band towards the barracks where Oliverotto's soldiers had just been consigned, and they, suddenly surprised and off their guard, were at once made prisoners; then the duke's troops began to pillage the town, and he summoned Macchiavelli.

Cæsar and the Florentine envoy were nearly two hours shut up together, and since Macchiavelli himself recounts the history of this interview, we will give his own words.

"He summoned me," says the Florentine ambassador, "and in the calmest manner showed me his joy at the success of this enterprise, which he assured me he had spoken of to me the evening before; I remember that he did, but *I did not at that time understand what he meant*; next he explained, in terms of much feeling and lively affection for our city, that different motives which had made him desire your alliance, a desire to which he hopes you will respond. He ended with charging me to lay three proposals before your lordships: first, that you rejoice with him in the destruction at a single blow of the mortal enemies of the king, himself, and you, and the

consequent disappearance of all seeds of trouble and dissension likely to waste Italy: this service of his, together with his refusal to allow the prisoners to march against you, ought, he thinks, to excite your gratitude towards him; secondly, he begs that you will at this juncture give him a striking proof of your friendliness, by urging your cavalry's advance towards Borgo, and there assembling some infantry also, in order that they may march with him, should need arise, on Castello or on Perugia. Lastly, he desires—and this is his third condition—that you arrest the Duke of Urbino, if he should flee from Castello into your territories, when he learns that Vitellozzo is a prisoner.

"When I objected that to give him up would not beseem the dignity of the republic, and that you would never consent, he approved of my words, and said that it would be enough for you to keep the duke, and not give him his liberty without His Excellency's permission. I have promised to give you all this information, to which he awaits your reply."

The same night eight masked men descended to the dungeon where the prisoners lay: they believed at that moment that the fatal hour had arrived for all. But this time the executioners had to do with Vitellozzo and Oliverotto alone. When these two captains heard that they were condemned, Oliverotto burst forth into reproaches against Vitellozzo, saying that it was all his fault that they had taken up arms against the duke: not a word Vitellozzo answered except a prayer that the pope might grant him plenary indulgence for all his sins. Then the masked men took them away, leaving Orsino and Gravina to await a similar fate, and led away the two chosen out to die to a secluded spot outside the ramparts of the town, where they were strangled and buried at once in two trenches that had been dug beforehand.

The two others were kept alive until it should be known if the pope had arrested Cardinal Orsino, archbishop of Florence and lord of Santa Croce; and when the answer was received in the affirmative from His Holiness, Gravina and Orsino, who had been transferred to a castle, were likewise strangled.

The duke, leaving instructions with Michelotto, set off for Sinigaglia as soon as the first execution was over, assuring Macchiavelli that he had never had any other thought than that of giving tranquillity to the Romagna and to Tuscany, and also that he thought he had succeeded by taking and putting to death the men who had been the cause of all the trouble; also that any other revolt that might take place in the future would be nothing but sparks that a drop of water could extinguish.

The pope had barely learned that Cæsar had his enemies in his power, when, eager to play the same winning game himself, he announced to Cardinal Orsino, though it was then midnight, that his son had taken Sinigaglia, and gave him an invitation to come the next morning and talk over the good news. The cardinal, delighted at this increase of favour, did not miss his appointment. So, in the morning, he started on horseback for the Vatican; but at a turn of the first street he met the governor of Rome with a detachment of cavalry, who congratulated himself on the happy chance that they were taking the same road, and accompanied him to the threshold of the Vatican. There the cardinal dismounted, and began to ascend the stairs; scarcely, however, had he reached the first landing before his mules and carriages were seized and shut in the palace stables. When he entered the hall of the Perropont, he found that he and all his suite were surrounded by armed men, who led him into another apartment, called the Vicar's Hall, where he found the Abbate Alviano, the protonotary Orsino, Jacopo Santa Croce, and Rinaldo Orsino, who were all prisoners like himself; at the same time the governor received orders to seize the castle of Monte Giardino, which belonged to the Orsini, and take away all the jewels, all the hangings, all the furniture, and all the silver that he might find.

The governor carried out his orders conscientiously, and brought to the Vatican everything he seized, down to the cardinal's account-book. On consulting this book, the pope found out two things: first, that a sum of 2000 ducats was due to the cardinal, no debtor's name being mentioned;

secondly, that the cardinal had bought three months before, for 1500 Roman crowns, a magnificent pearl which could not be found among the objects belonging to him: on which Alexander ordered that from that very moment until the negligence in the cardinal's accounts was repaired, the men who were in the habit of bringing him food twice a day on behalf of his mother should not be admitted into the Castle Sant' Angelo. The same day, the cardinal's mother sent the pope the 2000 ducats, and the next day his mistress, in man's attire, came in person to bring the missing pearl. His Holiness, however, was so struck with her beauty in this costume, that, we are told, he let her keep the pearl for the same price she had paid for it on the first occasion.

Then the pope allowed the cardinal to have his food brought as before, and he died of poison on the 22nd of February—that is, two days after his accounts had been set right.

That same night the Prince of Squillace set off to take possession, in the pope's name, of the lands of the deceased.

CHAPTER XIV

THE Duke of Valentinois had continued his road towards Città di Castello and Perugia, and had seized these two towns without striking a blow; for the Vitelli had fled from the former, and the latter had been abandoned by Gian Paolo Baglione with no attempt whatever at resistance. There still remained Siena, where Pandolfo Petrucci was shut up, the only man remaining of all who had joined the league against Cæsar.

But Siena was under the protection of the French. Besides, Siena was not one of the States of the Church, and Cæsar had no rights there. Therefore he was content with insisting upon Pandolfo Petrucci's leaving the town and retiring to Lucca, which he accordingly did.

Then all on this side being peaceful and the whole of Romagna in subjection, Cæsar resolved to return to Rome and help the pope to destroy all that was left of the Orsini.

This was all the easier because Louis XII, having suffered reverses in the kingdom of Naples, had since then been much concerned with his own affairs to disturb himself about his allies. So Cæsar, doing for the neighbourhood of the Holy See the same thing that he had done for the Romagna, seized in succession Vicovaro, Cera, Palombera, Lanzano, and Cervetti; when these conquests were achieved, having nothing else to do now that he had brought the pontifical States into subjection from the frontiers of Naples to those of Venice, he returned to Rome to concert with his father as to the means of converting his duchy into a kingdom.

Cæsar arrived at the right moment to share with Alexander the property of Cardinal Gian Michele, who had just died, having received a poisoned cup from the hands of the pope.

The future King of Italy found his father preoccupied with a grand project: he had resolved, for the Feast of St. Peter's, to create nine cardinals. What he had to gain from these nominations is as follows:—

First, the cardinals elected would leave all their offices vacant; these offices would fall into the hands of the pope, and he would sell them;

Secondly, each of them would buy his election, more or less dear according to his fortune; the price, left to be settled at the pope's fancy, would vary from 10,000 to 40,000 ducats;

Lastly, since as cardinals they would by law lose the right of making a will, the pope, in order to inherit from them, had only to poison them: this put him in the position of a butcher who, if he needs money, has only to cut the throat of the fattest sheep in the flock.

The nomination came to pass: the new cardinals were Giovanni Castellaro Valentino, archbishop of Trani; Francesco Remolini, ambassador from the King of Aragon; Francesco Soderini, bishop of Volterra; Melchiore Copis, bishop of Brissina; Nicolas Fiesque, bishop of Fréjus; Francesco di Sprate, bishop of Leome; Adriano Castellense, clerk of the chamber, treasurer-general, and secretary of the briefs; Francesco Loris, bishop of Elva, patriarch of Constantinople, and secretary to the pope; and Giacomo Casanova, protonotary and private chamberlain to His Holiness.

The price of their simony paid and their vacated offices sold, the pope made his choice of those he was to poison: the number was fixed at three, one old and two new; the old one was Cardinal Casanova, and the new ones Melchiore Copis and Adriano Castellense, who had taken the name of Adrian of Corneto from that town where he had been born, and where, in the capacity of clerk of the chamber, treasurer-general, and secretary of briefs, he had amassed an immense fortune.

So, when all was settled between Cæsar and the pope, they invited their chosen guests to supper in a vineyard situated near the Vatican, belonging to the Cardinal of Corneto. In the morning of this day, the 2nd of August, they sent their

servants and the steward to make all preparations, and Cæsar himself gave the pope's butler two bottles of wine prepared with the white powder resembling sugar whose mortal properties he had so often proved, and gave orders that he was to serve this wine only when he was told, and only to persons specially indicated;[1] the butler accordingly put the wine on a sideboard apart, bidding the waiters on no account to touch it, as it was reserved for the pope's drinking.

Towards evening Alexander VI walked from the Vatican leaning on Cæsar's arm, and turned his steps towards the vineyard, accompanied by Cardinal Caraffa; but as the heat was great and the climb rather steep, the pope, when he reached the top, stopped to take breath; then putting his hand on his breast, he found that he had left in his bedroom a chain that he always wore round his neck, which suspended a gold medallion that enclosed the sacred host. He owed this habit to a prophecy that an astrologer had made, that so long as he carried about a consecrated wafer, neither steel nor poison could take hold upon him. Now, finding himself without his talisman, he ordered Monsignore Caraffa to hurry back at once to the Vatican, and told him in which part of his room he had left it, so that he might get it and bring it him without delay. Then, as the walk had made him thirsty, he turned to a valet, giving signs with his hand as he did so that his messenger should make haste, and asked for something to drink. Cæsar, who was also thirsty, ordered the man to bring two glasses.

[1] The poison of the Borgias, say contemporary writers, was of two kinds, powder or liquid. The poison in the form of powder was a sort of white flour, almost impalpable, with the taste of sugar, and called Contarella. Its composition is unknown.

The liquid poison was prepared, we are told, in so strange a fashion that we cannot pass it by in silence. We repeat here what we read, and vouch for nothing ourselves, lest science should give us the lie.

A strong dose of arsenic was administered to a boar; as soon as the poison began to take effect, he was hung up by his heels; convulsions supervened, and a froth deadly and abundant ran out from his jaws: it was this froth, collected into a silver vessel and transferred into a bottle hermetically sealed, that made the liquid poison.

By a curious coincidence, the butler had just gone back to the Vatican to fetch some magnificent peaches that had been sent that very day to the pope, but which had been forgotten when he came here; so the valet went to the under butler, saying that His Holiness and Monsignore the Duke of Romagna were thirsty and asking for a drink. The under butler, seeing two bottles of wine set apart, and having heard that this wine was reserved for the pope, took one, and telling the valet to bring two glasses on a tray, poured out this wine, which both drank, little thinking it was what they had themselves prepared to poison their guests.

Meanwhile Caraffa hurried to the Vatican, and, as he knew the palace well, went up to the pope's bedroom, a light in his hand and attended by no servant. As he turned round a corridor a puff of wind blew out his lamp; still, as he knew the way, he went on, thinking there was no need of seeing to find the object he was in search of; but as he entered the room he recoiled a step, with a cry of terror: he beheld a ghastly apparition; it seemed that there before his eyes, in the middle of the room, between the door and the cabinet which held the medallion, Alexander VI, motionless and livid, was lying on a bier at whose four corners there burned four torches. The cardinal stood still for a moment, his eyes fixed, and his hair standing on end, without strength to move either backward or forward; then thinking it was all a trick of fancy or an apparition of the devil's making, he made the sign of the cross, invoking God's holy name; all instantly vanished, torches, bier, and corpse, and the seeming mortuary chamber was once more in darkness.

Then Cardinal Caraffa, who has himself recorded this strange event, and who was afterwards Pope Paul IV, entered boldly, and though an icy sweat ran down his brow, he went straight to the cabinet, and in the drawer indicated found the gold chain and the medallion, took them, and hastily went out to give them to the pope. He found supper served, the guests arrived, and His Holiness ready to take his place at table; as soon as the cardinal was in sight, His Holiness, who was very pale, made one step towards him; Caraffa doubled his

pace, and handed the medallion to him; but as the pope stretched forth his arm to take it, he fell back with a cry, instantly followed by violent convulsions: an instant later, as he advanced to render his father assistance, Cæsar was similarly seized; the effect of the poison had been more rapid than usual, for Cæsar had doubled the dose, and there is little doubt that their heated condition increased its activity.

The two stricken men were carried side by side to the Vatican, where each was taken to his own rooms: from that moment they never met again.

As soon as he reached his bed, the pope was seized with a violent fever, which did not give way to emetics or to bleeding; almost immediately it became necessary to administer the last sacraments of the Church; but his admirable bodily constitution, which seemed to have defied old age, was strong enough to fight eight days with death; at last, after a week of mortal agony, he died, without once uttering the name of Cæsar or Lucrezia, who were the two poles around which had turned all his affections and all his crimes. His age was seventy-two, and he had reigned eleven years.

Cæsar, perhaps because he had taken less of the fatal beverage, perhaps because the strength of his youth overcame the strength of the poison, or maybe,as some say, because when he reached his own rooms he had swallowed an antidote known only to himself, was not so prostrated as to lose sight for a moment of the terrible position he was in: he summoned his faithful Michelotto, with those he could best count on among his men, and disposed this band in the various rooms that led to his own, ordering the chief never to leave the foot of his bed, but to sleep lying on a rug, his hand upon the handle of his sword.

The treatment had been the same for Cæsar as for the pope, but in addition to bleeding and emetics strange baths were added, which Cæsar had himself asked for, having heard that in a similar case they had once cured Ladislaus, King of Naples. Four posts, strongly welded to the floor and ceiling, were set up in his room, like the machines at which farriers shoe horses; every day a bull was brought in, turned over on

his back and tied by his four legs to the four posts; then, when he was thus fixed, a cut was made in his belly a foot and a half long, through which the intestines were drawn out; then Cæsar slipped into this living bath of blood: when the bull was dead, Cæsar was taken out and rolled up in burning hot blankets, where, after copious perspirations, he almost always felt some sort of relief.

Every two hours Cæsar sent to ask news of his father: he hardly waited to hear that he was dead before, though still at death's door himself, he summoned up all the force of character and presence of mind that naturally belonged to him. He ordered Michelotto to shut the doors of the Vatican before the report of Alexander's decease could spread about the town, and forbade anyone whatsoever to enter the pope's apartments until the money and papers had been removed. Michelotto obeyed at once, went to find Cardinal Casanova, held a dagger at his throat, and made him deliver up the keys of the pope's rooms and cabinets; then, under his guidance, took away two chests full of gold, which perhaps contained 100,000 Roman crowns in specie, several boxes full of jewels, much silver and many precious vases; all these were carried to Cæsar's chamber; the guards of the room were doubled; then the doors of the Vatican were once more thrown open, and the death of the pope was proclaimed.

Although the news was expected, it produced none the less a terrible effect in Rome; for although Cæsar was still alive, his condition left everyone in suspense: had the mighty Duke of Romagna, the powerful condottiere who had taken thirty towns and fifteen fortresses in five years, been seated, sword in hand, upon his charger, nothing would have been uncertain or fluctuating even for a moment; for, as Cæsar afterwards told Macchiavelli, his ambitious soul had provided for all things that could occur on the day of the pope's death, except the one that he should be dying himself; but being nailed down to his bed, sweating off the effects the poison had wrought; so, though he had kept his power of thinking he could no longer act, but must needs wait and suffer the course of

events, instead of marching on in front and controlling them.

Thus he was forced to regulate his actions no longer by his own plans but according to circumstances. His most bitter enemies, who could press him hardest, were the Orsini and the Colonnas: from the one family he had taken their blood, from the other their goods. So he addressed himself to those to whom he could return what he had taken, and opened negotiations with the Colonnas.

Meanwhile the obsequies of the pope were going forward: the vice-chancellor had sent out orders to the highest among the clergy, the superiors of convents, and the secular orders, not to fail to appear, according to regular custom, on pain of being despoiled of their office and dignities, each bringing his own company to the Vatican, to be present at the pope's funeral; each therefore appeared on the day and at the hour appointed at the pontifical palace, whence the body was to be conveyed to the church of St. Peter's and there buried. The corpse was found to be abandoned and alone in the mortuary chamber; for everyone of the name of Borgia, except Cæsar, lay hidden, not knowing what might come to pass. This was indeed well justified; for Fabio Orsino, meeting one member of the family, stabbed him, and as a sign of the hatred they had sworn to one another, bathed his mouth and hands in the blood.

The agitation in Rome was so great, that when the corpse of Alexander VI was about to enter the church there occurred a kind of panic, such as will suddenly arise in times of popular agitation, instantly causing so great a disturbance in the funeral cortège that the guards drew up in battle array, the clergy fled into the sacristy, and the bearers dropped the bier. The people tearing off the pall which covered it, disclosed the corpse, and everyone could see with impunity and close at hand the man who, fifteen days before, had made princes, kings, and emperors tremble, from one end of the world to the other.

But in accordance with that religious feeling towards death which all men instinctively feel, and which alone

survives every other even in the heart of the atheist, the bier was taken up again and carried to the foot of the great altar in St. Peter's, where, set on trestles, it was exposed to public view; but the body had become so black, so deformed and swollen, that it was horrible to behold; from its nose a bloody matter escaped, the mouth gaped hideously, and the tongue was so monstrously enlarged that it filled the whole cavity; to this frightful appearance was added a decomposition so great that, although at the pope's funeral it is customary to kiss the hand which bore the fisherman's ring, not one approached to offer this mark of respect and religious reverence to the representative of God on earth.

Towards seven o'clock in the evening, when the declining day adds so deep a melancholy to the silence of a church, four porters and two working carpenters carried the corpse into the chapel where it was to be interred, and lifting it off the catafalque where it lay in state, put it in the coffin which was to be its last abode; but it was found that the coffin was too short, and the body could not be got in till the legs were bent and thrust in with violent blows; then the carpenters put on the lid, and while one of them sat on the top to force the knees to bend, the others hammered in the nails amid those Shakespearean pleasantries that sound as the last orison in the ear of the mighty; then, says Tommaso Tommasi, he was placed on the right of the great altar of St. Peter's, beneath a very ugly tomb.

The next morning this epitaph was found inscribed upon the tomb:—

"VENDIT ALEXANDER CLAVES, ALTARIA, CHRISTUM:
EMERAT ILLE PRIUS, VENDERE JURE POTEST;"

that is,

"Pope Alexander sold the Christ, the altars, and the keys:
But anyone who buys a thing may sell it if he please."

CHAPTER XV

FROM the effect produced at Rome by Alexander's death, one may imagine what happened not only in the whole of Italy but also in the rest of the world: for a moment Europe swayed, for the column which supported the vault of the political edifice had given way, and the star with eyes of flame and rays of blood, round which all things had revolved for the last eleven years, was now extinguished, and for a moment the world, on a sudden struck motionless, remained in silence and darkness.

After the first moment of stupefaction, all who had an injury to avenge arose and hurried to the chase. Sforza retook Pesaro, Baglione Perugia, Guido and Ubaldo Urbino, and La Rovere Sinigaglia; the Vitelli entered Città di Castello, the Appiani Piombino, the Orsini Monte Giordano and their other territories; Romagna alone remained impassive and loyal, for the people, who have no concern with the quarrels of the great, provided they do not affect themselves, had never been so happy as under the government of Cæsar.

The Colonnas were pledged to maintain a neutrality, and had been consequently restored to the possession of their castles and the cities of Chiuzano, Capo d'Anno, Frascati, Rocca di Papa, and Nettuno, which they found in a better condition than when they had left them, as the pope had had them embellished and fortified.

Cæsar was still in the Vatican with his troops, who, loyal to him in his misfortune, kept watch about the palace, where he was writhing on his bed of pain and roaring like a wounded lion. The cardinals, who had in their first terror fled, each

his own way, instead of attending the pope's obsequies, began to assemble once more, some at the Minerva, others around Cardinal Caraffa. Frightened by the troops that Cæsar still had, especially since the command was entrusted to Michelotto, they collected all the money they could to levy an army of 2000 soldiers with Charles Taneo at their head, with the title of Captain of the Sacred College. It was then hoped that peace was re-established, when it was heard that Prospero Colonna was coming with 3000 men from the side of Naples, and Fabio Orsino from the side of Viterbo with 200 horse and more than 1000 infantry. Indeed, they entered Rome at only one day's interval one from another, by so similar an ardour were they inspired.

Thus there were five armies in Rome: Cæsar's army, holding the Vatican and the Borgo; the army of the Bishop of Nicastro, who had received from Alexander the guardianship of the Castle Sant' Angelo and had shut himself up there, refusing to yield; the army of the Sacred College, which was stationed round about the Minerva; the army of Prospero Colonna, which was encamped at the Capitol; and the army of Fabio Orsino, in barracks at the Ripetta.

On their side, the Spaniards had advanced to Terracino, and the French to Nepi. The cardinals saw that Rome now stood upon a mine which the least spark might cause to explode: they summoned the ambassadors of the Emperor of Germany, the Kings of France and Spain, and the republic of Venice to raise their voice in the name of their masters. The ambassadors, impressed with the urgency of the situation, began by declaring the Sacred College inviolable: they then ordered the Orsini, the Colonnas, and the Duke of Valentinois to leave Rome and go each his own way.

The Orsini were the first to submit: the next morning their example was followed by the Colonnas. No one was left but Cæsar, who said he was willing to go, but desired to make his conditions beforehand: the Vatican was undermined, he declared, and if his demands were refused he and those who came to take him should be blown up together. It was

known that his were never empty threats: they came to terms with him.[1]

Cæsar promised to remain ten miles away from Rome the whole time the Conclave lasted, and not to take any action against the town or any other of the Ecclesiastical States: Fabio Orsino and Prospero Colonna had made the same promises.

The Venetian ambassador answered for the Orsini, the Spanish ambassador for the Colonnas, the ambassador of France for Cæsar.

At the day and hour appointed Cæsar sent out his artillery, which consisted of eighteen pieces of cannon, and 400 infantry of the Sacred College, on each of whom he bestowed a ducat: behind the artillery came a hundred chariots escorted by his advance guard.

The duke was carried out of the gate of the Vatican: he lay on a bed covered with a scarlet canopy, supported by twelve halberdiers, leaning forward on his cushions so that no one might see his face with its purple lips and bloodshot eyes: beside him was his naked sword, to show that, feeble as he was, he could use it at need: his finest charger, caparisoned in black velvet embroidered with his arms, walked beside the bed, led by a page, so that Cæsar could mount in case of surprise or attack: before him and behind, both right and left, marched his army, their arms in rest, but without beating of drums or blowing of trumpets: this gave a sombre, funereal air to the whole procession, which at the gate of the city met Prospero Colonna awaiting it with a considerable band of men.

Cæsar thought at first that, breaking his word as he had so often done himself, Prospero Colonna was going to attack him. He ordered a halt, and prepared to mount his horse; but Prospero Colonna, seeing the state he was in, advanced to his bedside alone: he came, against expectation, to offer him an escort, fearing an ambuscade on the part of Fabio Orsino,

[1] It was agreed that Cæsar should quit Rome with his army, artillery, and baggage; and to ensure his not being attacked or molested in the streets, the Sacred College should add to his numbers 400 infantry, who, in case of attack or insult, would fight for him.

who had loudly sworn that he would lose his honour or avenge the death of Paolo Orsino, his father. Cæsar thanked Colonna, and replied that from the moment that Orsino stood alone he ceased to fear him. Then Colonna saluted the duke, and rejoined his men, directing them towards Albano, while Cæsar took the road to Città Castellana, which had remained loyal.

When there, Cæsar found himself not only master of his own fate but of others as well: of the twenty-two votes he owned in the Sacred College twelve had remained faithful, and as the Conclave was composed in all of thirty-seven cardinals, he with his twelve votes could make the majority incline to whichever side he chose. Accordingly he was courted both by the Spanish and the French party, each desiring the election of a pope of their own nation. Cæsar listened, promising nothing and refusing nothing: he gave his twelve votes to Francesco Piccolomini, Cardinal of Siena, one of his father's creatures who had remained his friend, and the latter was elected on the 8th of October by the name of Pius III.

Cæsar's hopes did not deceive him. Pius III was hardly elected before he sent him a safe-conduct to Rome: the duke came back with 250 men-at-arms, 250 light horse, and 800 infantry, and lodged in his palace, the soldiers camping round about.

Meanwhile the Orsini, pursuing their projects of vengeance against Cæsar, had been levying many troops at Perugia and the neighbourhood to bring against him to Rome, and as they fancied that France, in whose service they were engaged, was humouring the duke for the sake of the twelve votes which were wanted to secure the election of Cardinal Amboise at the next Conclave, they went over to the service of Spain.

Meanwhile Cæsar was signing a new treaty with Louis XII, by which he engaged to support him with all his forces, and even with his person, so soon as he could ride, in maintaining his conquest of Naples: Louis, on his side, guaranteed that he should retain possession of the States he still held, and promised his help in recovering those he had lost.

The day when this treaty was made known, Gonzalvo di

Cordova proclaimed to the sound of a trumpet in all the streets of Rome that every Spanish subject serving in a foreign army was at once to break his engagement on pain of being found guilty of high treason.

This measure robbed Cæsar of ten or twelve of his best officers and of nearly 300 men.

Then the Orsini, seeing his army thus reduced, entered Rome, supported by the Spanish ambassador, and summoned Cæsar to appear before the pope and the Sacred College and give an account of his crimes.

Faithful to his engagements, Pius III replied that in his quality of sovereign prince the duke in his temporal administration was quite independent and was answerable for his actions to God alone.

But as the pope felt he could not much longer support Cæsar against his enemies for all his goodwill, he advised him to try to join the French army, which was still advancing on Naples, in the midst of which he would alone find safety. Cæsar resolved to retire to Bracciano, where Gian Giordano Orsino, who had once gone with him to France, and who was the only member of the family who had not declared against him, offered him an asylum in the name of Cardinal d'Amboise: so one morning he ordered his troops to march for this town, and, taking his place in their midst, he left Rome.

But though Cæsar had kept his intentions quiet, the Orsini had been forewarned, and, taking out all the troops they had by the gate of San Pancracio, they had made a long détour and blocked Cæsar's way; so, when the latter arrived at Storta, he found the Orsini's army drawn up awaiting him in numbers exceeding his own by at least one-half.

Cæsar saw that to come to blows in his then feeble state was to rush on certain destruction; so he ordered his troops to retire, and, being a first-rate strategist, echelonned his retreat so skilfully that his enemies, though they followed, dared not attack him, and he re-entered the pontifical town without the loss of a single man.

This time Cæsar went straight to the Vatican, to put himself

more directly under the pope's protection; he distributed his soldiers about the palace, so as to guard all its exits. Now the Orsini, resolved to make an end of Cæsar, had determined to attack him wheresoever he might be, with no regard to the sanctity of the place: this they attempted, but without success, as Cæsar's men kept a good guard on every side, and offered a strong defence.

Then the Orsini, not being able to force the guard of the Castle Sant' Angelo, hoped to succeed better with the duke by leaving Rome and then returning by the Torione gate; but Cæsar anticipated this move, and they found the gate guarded and barricaded. None the less, they pursued their design, seeking by open violence the vengeance that they had hoped to obtain by craft; and, having surprised the approaches to the gate, set fire to it: a passage gained, they made their way into the gardens of the castle, where they found Cæsar awaiting them at the head of his cavalry.

Face to face with danger, the duke had found his old strength: and he was the first to rush upon his enemies, loudly challenging Orsino in the hope of killing him should they meet; but either Orsino did not hear him or dared not fight; and after an exciting contest, Cæsar, who was numerically two-thirds weaker than his enemy, saw his cavalry cut to pieces; and after performing miracles of personal strength and courage, was obliged to return to the Vatican. There he found the pope in mortal agony: the Orsini, tired of contending against the old man's word of honour pledged to the duke, had by the interposition of Pandolfo Petrucci, gained the ear of the pope's surgeon, who placed a poisoned plaster upon a wound in his leg.

The pope then was actually dying when Cæsar, covered with dust and blood, entered his room, pursued by his enemies, who knew no check till they reached the palace walls, behind which the remnant of his army still held their ground.

Pius III, who knew he was about to die, sat up in his bed, gave Cæsar the key of the corridor which led to the Castle of Sant' Angelo, and an order addressed to the governor to admit him and his family, to defend him to the last extremity, and

to let him go wherever he thought fit; and then fell fainting on his bed.

Cæsar took his two daughters by the hand, and, followed by the little dukes of Sermoneta and Nepi, took refuge in the last asylum open to him.

The same night the pope died: he had reigned only twenty-six days.

After his death, Cæsar, who had cast himself fully dressed upon his bed, heard his door open at two o'clock in the morning: not knowing what anyone might want of him at such an hour, he raised himself on one elbow and felt for the handle of his sword with his other hand; but at the first glance he recognised in his nocturnal visitor Giuliano della Rovere.

Utterly exhausted by the poison, abandoned by his troops, fallen as he was from the height of his power, Cæsar, who could now do nothing for himself, could yet make a pope; Giuliano della Rovere had come to buy the votes of his twelve cardinals.

Cæsar imposed his conditions, which were accepted.

If elected, Giuliano della Rovere was to help Cæsar to recover his territories in Romagna; Cæsar was to remain general of the Church; and Francesco Maria della Rovere, prefect of Rome, was to marry one of Cæsar's daughters.

On these conditions Cæsar sold his twelve cardinals to Giuliano.

The next day, at Giuliano's request, the Sacred College ordered the Orsini to leave Rome for the whole time occupied by the Conclave.

On the 31st of October 1503, at the first scrutiny, Giuliano della Rovere was elected pope, and took the name of Julius II.

He was scarcely installed in the Vatican when he made it his first care to summon Cæsar and give him his former rooms there; then, since the duke was fully restored to health, he began to busy himself with the re-establishment of his affairs, which had suffered sadly of late.

The defeat of his army and his own escape to Sant' Angelo, where he was supposed to be a prisoner, had brought about great changes in Romagna. Cesena was once more in the

power of the Church, as formerly it had been; Gian Sforza had again entered Pesaro; Ordelafi had seized Forli; Malatesta was laying claim to Rimini; the inhabitants of Imola had assassinated their governor, and the town was divided between two opinions, one that it should be put into the hands of the Riani, the other, into the hands of the Church; Faenza had remained loyal longer than any other place; but at last, losing hope of seeing Cæsar recover his power, it had summoned Francesco, a natural son of Galeotto Manfredi, the last surviving heir of this unhappy family, all whose legitimate descendants had been massacred by Borgia.

It is true that the fortresses of these different places had taken no part in these revolutions, and had remained immutably faithful to the Duke of Valentinois.

So it was not precisely the defection of these towns, which, thanks to their fortresses, might be reconquered, that was the cause of uneasiness to Cæsar and Julius II, it was the difficult situation that Venice had thrust upon them. Venice, in the spring of the same year, had signed a treaty of peace with the Turks: thus set free from her eternal enemy, she had just led her forces to the Romagna, which she had always coveted: these troops had been led towards Ravenna, the farthermost limit of the Papal estates, and put under the command of Giacopo Venieri, who had failed to capture Cesena, and had only failed through the courage of its inhabitants; but this check had been amply compensated by the surrender of the fortresses of Val di Lamone and Faenza, by the capture of Forlimpopoli, and the surrender of Rimini, which Pandolfo Malatesta, its lord, exchanged for the seigniory of Cittadella, in the State of Padua, and for the rank of gentleman of Venice.

Then Cæsar made a proposition to Julius II: this was to make a momentary cession to the Church of his own estates in Romagna, so that the respect felt by the Venetians for the Church might save these towns from their aggressors; but, says Guicciardini, Julius II, whose ambition, so natural in sovereign rulers, had not yet extinguished the remains of rectitude, refused to accept the places, afraid of exposing him-

self to the temptation of keeping them later on, against his promises.

But as the case was urgent, he proposed to Cæsar that he should leave Rome, embark at Ostia, and cross over to Spezia, where Michelotto was to meet him at the head of 100 men-at-arms and 100 light horse, the only remnant of his magnificent army, thence by land to Ferrara, and from Ferrara to Imola, where, once arrived, he could utter his war-cry so loud that it would be heard through the length and breadth of Romagna.

This advice being after Cæsar's own heart, he accepted it at once.

The resolution submitted to the Sacred College was approved, and Cæsar left for Ostia, accompanied by Bartolommeo della Rovere, nephew of His Holiness.

Cæsar at last felt he was free, and fancied himself already on his good charger, a second time carrying war into all the places where he had formerly fought. When he reached Ostia, he was met by the cardinals of Sorrento and Volterra, who came in the name of Julius II to ask him to give up the very same citadels which he had refused three days before: the fact was that the pope had learned in the interim that the Venetians had made fresh aggressions, and recognised that the method proposed by Cæsar was the only one that would check them. But this time it was Cæsar's turn to refuse, for he was weary of these tergiversations, and feared a trap; so he said that the surrender asked for would be useless, since by God's help he should be in Romagna before eight days were past. So the cardinals of Sorrento and Volterra returned to Rome with a refusal.

The next morning, just as Cæsar was setting foot on his vessel, he was arrested in the name of Julius II.

He thought at first that this was the end; he was used to this mode of action, and knew how short was the space between a prison and a tomb; the matter was all the easier in his case, because the pope, if he chose, would have plenty of pretext for making a case against him. But the heart of Julius was of another kind from his; swift to anger, but open to clemency;

so, when the duke came back to Rome guarded, the momentary irritation his refusal had caused was already calmed, and the pope received him in his usual fashion at his palace, and with his ordinary courtesy, although from the beginning it was easy for the duke to see that he was being watched. In return for this kind reception, Cæsar consented to yield the fortress of Cesena to the pope, as being a town which had once belonged to the Church, and now should return; giving the deed, signed by Cæsar, to one of his captains, called Pietro d'Oviedo, he ordered him to take possession of the fortress in the name of the Holy See. Pietro obeyed, and starting at once for Cesena, presented himself armed with his warrant before Don Diego Chiñon, a noble condottiere of Spain, who was holding the fortress in Cæsar's name. But when he had read over the paper that Pietro d'Oviedo brought, Don Diego replied that as he knew his lord and master was a prisoner, it would be disgraceful in him to obey an order that had probably been wrested from him by violence, and that the bearer deserved to die for undertaking such a cowardly office. He therefore bade his soldiers seize d'Oviedo and fling him down from the top of the walls: this sentence was promptly executed.

This mark of fidelity might have proved fatal to Cæsar: when the pope heard how his messenger had been treated, he flew into such a rage that the prisoner thought a second time that his hour was come; and in order to receive his liberty, he made the first of those new propositions to Julius II, which were drawn up in the form of a treaty and sanctioned by a bull. By these arrangements, the Duke of Valentinois was bound to hand over to His Holiness, within the space of forty days, the fortresses of Cesena and Bertinoro, and authorise the surrender of Forli. This arrangement was guaranteed by two bankers in Rome who were to be responsible for 15,000 ducats, the sum total of the expenses which the governor pretended he had incurred in the place on the duke's account. The pope on his part engaged to send Cæsar to Ostia under the sole guard of the Cardinal of Santa Croce and two officers, who were to give him his full liberty on the very day when his engagements were

fulfilled: should this not happen, Cæsar was to be taken to Rome and imprisoned in the Castle of Sant' Angelo. In fulfilment of this treaty, Cæsar went down the Tiber as far as Ostia, accompanied by the pope's treasurer and many of his servants. The Cardinal of Santa Croce followed, and the next day joined him there.

But as Cæsar feared that Julius II might keep him a prisoner, in spite of his pledged word, after he had yielded up the fortresses, he asked, through the mediation of Cardinals Borgia and Remolino, who, not feeling safe at Rome, had retired to Naples, for a safe-conduct to Gonzalvo of Cordova, and for two ships to take him there; with the return of the courier the safe-conduct arrived, announcing that the ships would shortly follow.

In the midst of all this, the Cardinal of Santa Croce, learning that by the duke's orders the governors of Cesena and Bertinoro had surrendered their fortresses to the captains of His Holiness, relaxed his rigour, and knowing that his prisoner would some day or other be free, began to let him go out without a guard. Then Cæsar, feeling some fear lest when he started with Gonzalvo's ships the same thing might happen as on the occasion of his embarking on the pope's vessel—that is, that he might be arrested a second time—concealed himself in a house outside the town; and when night came on, mounting a wretched horse that belonged to a peasant, rode as far as Nettuno, and there hired a little boat, in which he embarked for Monte Dragone, and thence gained Naples. Gonzalvo received him with such joy that Cæsar was deceived as to his intention, and this time believed that he was really saved. His confidence was redoubled when, opening his designs to Gonzalvo, and telling him that he counted upon gaining Pisa and thence going on into Romagna, Gonzalvo allowed him to recruit as many soldiers at Naples as he pleased, promising him two ships to embark with. Cæsar, deceived by these appearances, stopped nearly six weeks at Naples, every day seeing the Spanish governor and discussing his plans. But Gonzalvo was only waiting to gain time to tell the King of

Spain that his enemy was in his hands; and Cæsar actually went to the castle to bid Gonzalvo good-bye, thinking he was just about to start after he had embarked his men on the two ships. The Spanish governor received him with his accustomed courtesy, wished him every kind of prosperity, and embraced him as he left; but at the door of the castle Cæsar found one of Gonzalvo's captains, Nuño Campejo by name, who arrested him as the prisoner of Ferdinand the Catholic. Cæsar at these words heaved a deep sigh, cursing the ill luck that had made him trust the word of an enemy, when he had so often broken his own.

He was at once taken to the castle, where the prison gate closed behind him, and he felt no hope that anyone would come to his aid; for the only being who was devoted to him in this world was Michelotto, and he had heard that Michelotto had been arrested near Pisa by order of Julius II. While Cæsar was being taken to prison an officer came to him to deprive him of the safe-conduct given him by Gonzalvo.

The day after his arrest, which occurred on the 27th of May 1504, Cæsar was taken on board a ship, which at once weighed anchor and set sail for Spain: during the whole voyage he had but one page to serve him, and as soon as he disembarked he was taken to the castle of Medina del Campo.

Ten years later, Gonzalvo, who at that time was himself proscribed, owned to Loxa on his dying bed that now, when he was to appear in the presence of God, two things weighed cruelly on his conscience: one was his treason to Ferdinand, the other his breach of faith towards Cæsar.

CHAPTER XVI

CÆSAR was in prison for two years, always hoping that Louis XII would reclaim him as peer of the kingdom of France; but Louis, much disturbed by the loss of the battle of Garigliano, which robbed him of the kingdom of Naples, had enough to do with his own affairs without busying himself with his cousin's. So the prisoner was beginning to despair, when one day as he broke his bread at breakfast he found a file and a little bottle containing a narcotic, with a letter from Michelotto, saying that he was out of prison and had left Italy for Spain, and now lay in hiding with the Count of Benevento in the neighbouring village: he added that from the next day forward he and the count would wait every night on the road between the fortress and the village with three excellent horses; it was now Cæsar's part to do the best he could with his bottle and file. When the whole world had abandoned the Duke of Romagna he had been remembered by a sbirro.

The prison where he had been shut up for two years was so hateful to Cæsar that he lost not a single moment: the same day he attacked one of the bars of a window that looked out upon an inner court, and soon contrived so to manipulate it that it would need only a final push to come out. But not only was the window nearly seventy feet from the ground, but one could only get out of the court by using an exit reserved for the governor, of which he alone had the key; also this key never left him; by day it hung at his waist, by night it was under his pillow: this then was the chief difficulty.

But prisoner though he was, Cæsar had always been treated

with the respect due to his name and rank: every day at the dinner-hour he was conducted from the room that served as his prison to the governor, who did the honours of the table in a grand and courteous fashion. The fact was that Don Manuel had served with honour under King Ferdinand, and therefore, while he guarded Cæsar rigorously, according to orders, he had a great respect for so brave a general, and took pleasure in listening to the accounts of his battles. So he had often insisted that Cæsar should not only dine but also breakfast with him; happily the prisoner, yielding perhaps to some presentiment, had till now refused this favour. This was of great advantage to him, since, thanks to his solitude, he had been able to receive the instruments of escape sent by Michelotto. The same day he received them, Cæsar, on going back to his room, made a false step and sprained his foot; at the dinner-hour he tried to go down, but he pretended to be suffering so cruelly that he gave it up. The governor came to see him in his room, and found him stretched upon the bed.

The day after, he was no better; the governor had his dinner sent in, and came to see him, as on the night before; he found his prisoner so dejected and gloomy in his solitude that he offered to come and sup with him: Cæsar gratefully accepted.

This time it was the prisoner who did the honours: Cæsar was charmingly courteous; the governor thought he would profit by this lack of restraint to put to him certain questions as to the manner of his arrest, and asked him as an Old Castilian, for whom honour is still of some account, what the truth really was as to Gonzalvo's and Ferdinand's breach of faith with him. Cæsar appeared extremely inclined to give him his entire confidence, but showed by a sign that the attendants were in the way. This precaution appeared quite natural, and the governor took no offence, but hastened to send them all away, so as to be sooner alone with his companion. When the door was shut, Cæsar filled his glass and the governor's, proposing the king's health: the governor honoured the toast: Cæsar at once began his tale; but he had scarcely uttered a third part of it when, interesting as it

was, the eyes of his host shut as though by magic, and he slid under the table in a profound sleep.

After half an hour had passed, the servants, hearing no noise, entered and found the two, one on the table, the other under it: this event was not so extraordinary that they paid any great attention to it: all they did was to carry Don Manuel to his room and lift Cæsar on the bed; then they put away the remnant of the meal for the next day's supper, shut the door very carefully, and left their prisoner alone.

Cæsar stayed for a minute motionless and apparently plunged in the deepest sleep; but when he had heard the steps retreating, he quietly raised his head, opened his eyes, slipped off the bed, walked to the door, slowly indeed, but not to all appearance feeling the accident of the night before, and applied his ear for some minutes to the keyhole; then lifting his head with an expression of indescribable pride, he wiped his brow with his hand, and for the first time since his guards went out, breathed freely with full-drawn breaths.

There was no time to lose: his first care was to shut the door as securely on the inside as it was already shut on the outside, to blow out the lamp, to open the window, and to finish sawing through the bar. When this was done, he undid the bandages on his leg, took down the window and bed curtains, tore them into strips, joined the sheets, table napkins and cloth, and with all these things tied together end to end, formed a rope fifty or sixty feet long, with knots every here and there. This rope he fixed securely to the bar next to the one he had just cut through; then he climbed up to the window and began what was really the hardest part of his perilous enterprise, clinging with hands and feet to this fragile support. Luckily he was both strong and skilful, and he went down the whole length of the rope without accident; but when he reached the end and was hanging on the last knot, he sought in vain to touch the ground with his feet: his rope was too short.

The situation was a terrible one: the darkness of the night prevented the fugitive from seeing how far off he was from the ground, and his fatigue prevented him from even attempting

to climb up again. Cæsar put up a brief prayer, whether to God or to Satan he alone could say; then letting go the rope, he dropped from a height of twelve or fifteen feet.

The danger was too great for the fugitive to trouble about a few trifling contusions: he at once rose, and guiding himself by the direction of his window, he went straight to the little door of exit; he then put his hand into the pocket of his doublet, and a cold sweat damped his brow; either he had forgotten and left it in his room or had lost it in his fall; anyhow, he had not the key.

But summoning his recollections, he quite gave up the first idea for the second, which was the only likely one: again he crossed the court, looking for the place where the key might have fallen, by the aid of the wall round a tank on which he had laid his hand when he got up; but the object of search was so small and the night so dark that there was little chance of getting any result; still Cæsar sought for it, for in this key was his last hope: suddenly a door was opened, and a night watch appeared, preceded by two torches. Cæsar for the moment thought he was lost, but remembering the tank behind him, he dropped into it, and with nothing but his head above water anxiously watched the movements of the soldiers, as they advanced beside him, passed only a few feet away, crossed the court, and then disappeared by an opposite door. But short as their luminous apparition had been, it had lighted up the ground, and Cæsar by the glare of the torches had caught the glitter of the long-sought key, and as soon as the door was shut behind the men was again master of his liberty.

Half-way between the castle and the village two cavaliers and a led horse were waiting for him: the two men were Michelotto and the Count of Benevento. Cæsar sprang upon the riderless horse, pressed with fervour the hand of the count and the sbirro; then all three galloped to the frontier of Navarre, where they arrived three days later, and were honourably received by the king, Jean d'Albret, the brother of Cæsar's wife.

From Navarre he thought to pass into France, and from France to make an attempt upon Italy, with the aid of Louis XII; but during Cæsar's detention in the castle of Medina del Campo, Louis had made peace with the King of Spain; and when he heard of Cæsar's flight, instead of helping him, as there was some reason to expect he would, since he was a relative by marriage, he took away the duchy of Valentinois and also his pension. Still, Cæsar had nearly 200,000 ducats in the charge of bankers at Genoa; he wrote asking for this sum, with which he hoped to levy troops in Spain and in Navarre, and make an attempt upon Pisa: 500 men, 200,000 ducats, his name and his sword were more than enough to save him from despair.

The bankers denied the deposit.

Cæsar was at the mercy of his brother-in-law.

One of the vassals of the King of Navarre, named Prince Alarino, had just then revolted: Cæsar then took command of the army which Jean d'Albret was sending out against him, followed by Michelotto, who was as faithful in adversity as ever before. Thanks to Cæsar's courage and skilful tactics, Prince Alarino was beaten in a first encounter; but the day after his defeat he rallied his army, and offered battle about three o'clock in the afternoon. Cæsar accepted it.

For nearly four hours they fought obstinately on both sides; but at length, as the day was going down, Cæsar proposed to decide the issue by making a charge himself, at the head of a hundred men-at-arms, upon a body of cavalry which made his adversary's chief force. To his great astonishment, this cavalry at the first shock gave way and took flight in the direction of a little wood, where they seemed to be seeking refuge. Cæsar followed close on their heels up to the edge of the forest; then suddenly the pursued turned right about face, three or four hundred archers came out of the wood to help them, and Cæsar's men, seeing that they had fallen into an ambush, took to their heels like cowards, and abandoned their leader.

Left alone, Cæsar would not budge one step; possibly he had had enough of life, and his heroism was rather the result

L. Boulanger, del. *N. Desmadryl, sculp.*

THE FINDING OF THE BODY OF CÆSAR BORGIA ON THE BATTLEFIELD OF VIANE

of satiety than courage: however that may be, he defended himself like a lion; but, riddled with arrows and bolts, his horse at last fell, with Cæsar's leg under him. His adversaries rushed upon him, and one of them thrusting a sharp and slender iron pike through a weak place in his armour, pierced his breast; Cæsar cursed God and died.

But the rest of the enemy's army was defeated, thanks to the courage of Michelotto, who fought like a valiant condottiere, but learned, on returning to the camp in the evening, from those who had fled, that they had abandoned Cæsar and that he had never reappeared. Then only too certain, from his master's well-known courage, that disaster had occurred, he desired to give one last proof of his devotion by not leaving his body to the wolves and birds of prey. Torches were lighted, for it was after dark, and with ten or twelve of those who had gone with Cæsar as far as the little wood, he went to seek his master. On reaching the spot they pointed out, he beheld five men stretched side by side; four of them were dressed, but the fifth had been stripped of his clothing and lay completely naked. Michelotto dismounted, lifted the head upon his knees, and by the light of the torches recognised Cæsar.

Thus fell, on the 10th of March 1507, on an unknown field, near an obscure village called Viane, in a wretched skirmish with the vassal of a petty king, the man whom Macchiavelli presents to all princes as the model of ability, diplomacy, and courage.

As to Lucrezia, the fair Duchess of Ferrara, she died full of years and honours, adored as a queen by her subjects, and sung as a goddess by Ariosto and by Bembo.

EPILOGUE

THERE was once in Paris, says Boccaccio, a brave and good merchant named Jean de Civigny, who did a great trade in drapery, and was connected in business with a neighbour and fellow-merchant, a very rich man called Abraham, who, though a Jew, enjoyed a good reputation. Jean de Civigny, appreciating the qualities of the worthy Israelite, feared lest, good man as he was, his false religion would bring his soul straight to eternal perdition; so he began to urge him gently as a friend to renounce his errors and open his eyes to the Christian faith, which he could see for himself was prospering and spreading day by day, being the only true and good religion; whereas his own creed, it was very plain, was so quickly diminishing that it would soon disappear from the face of the earth. The Jew replied that except in his own religion there was no salvation, that he was born in it, and proposed to live and die in it, and that he knew nothing in the world that could change his opinion. Still, in his proselytising fervour Jean would not think himself beaten, and never a day passed but he demonstrated with those fair words the merchant uses to seduce a customer the superiority of the Christian religion above the Jewish; and although Abraham was a great master of Mosaic law, he began to enjoy his friend's preaching, either because of the friendship he felt for him or because the Holy Ghost descended upon the tongue of the new apostle; still, obstinate in his own belief, he would not change. The more he persisted in his error, the more excited was Jean about converting him, so that at last, by God's help, being somewhat shaken by his friend's urgency, Abraham one day said—

"Listen, Jean: since you have it so much at heart that I

should be converted, behold me disposed to satisfy you; but before I go to Rome to see him whom you call God's vicar on earth, I must study his manner of life and his morals, as also those of his brethren the cardinals; and if, as I doubt not, they are in harmony with what you preach, I will admit that, as you have taken such pains to show me, your faith is better than mine, and I will do as you desire; but if it should prove otherwise, I shall remain a Jew, as I was before; for it is not worth while, at my age, to change my belief for a worse one."

Jean was very sad when he heard these words; and he said mournfully to himself, "Now I have lost my time and pains, which I thought I had spent so well when I was hoping to convert this unhappy Abraham; for if he unfortunately goes, as he says he will, to the court of Rome, and there sees the shameful life led by the servants of the Church, instead of becoming a Christian the Jew will be more of a Jew than ever." Then turning to Abraham, he said, "Ah, friend, why do you wish to incur such fatigue and expense by going to Rome, besides the fact that travelling by sea or by land must be very dangerous for so rich a man as you are? Do you suppose there is no one here to baptize you? If you have any doubts concerning the faith I have expounded, where better than here will you find theologians capable of contending with them and allaying them? So, you see, this voyage seems to me quite unnecessary: just imagine that the priests there are such as you see here, and all the better in that they are nearer to the supreme pastor. If you are guided by my advice, you will postpone this toil till you have committed some grave sin and need absolution; then you and I will go together."

But the Jew replied—

"I believe, dear Jean, that everything is as you tell me; but you know how obstinate I am. I will go to Rome, or I will never be a Christian."

Then Jean, seeing his great wish, resolved that it was no use trying to thwart him, and wished him good luck; but in his heart he gave up all hope; for it was certain that his friend

would come back from his pilgrimage more of a Jew than ever, if the court of Rome was still as he had seen it.

But Abraham mounted his horse, and at his best speed took the road to Rome, where on his arrival he was wonderfully well received by his co-religionists; and after staying there a good long time, he began to study the behaviour of the pope, the cardinals and other prelates, and of the whole court. But much to his surprise he found out, partly by what passed under his eyes and partly by what he was told, that all from the pope downward to the lowest sacristan of St. Peter's were committing the sins of luxurious living in a most disgraceful and unbridled manner, with no remorse and no shame, so that pretty women and handsome youths could obtain any favours they pleased. In addition to this sensuality which they exhibited in public, he saw that they were gluttons and drunkards, so much so that they were more the slaves of the belly than are the greediest of animals. When he looked a little further, he found them so avaricious and fond of money that they sold for hard cash both human bodies and divine offices, and with less conscience than a man in Paris would sell cloth or any other merchandise. Seeing this and much more that it would not be proper to set down here, it seemed to Abraham, himself a chaste, sober, and upright man, that he had seen enough. So he resolved to return to Paris, and carried out the resolution with his usual promptitude. Jean de Civigny held a great fête in honour of his return, although he had lost hope of his coming back converted. But he left time for him to settle down before he spoke of anything, thinking there would be plenty of time to hear the bad news he expected. But, after a few days of rest, Abraham himself came to see his friend, and Jean ventured to ask what he thought of the Holy Father, the cardinals, and the other persons at the pontifical court. At these words the Jew exclaimed, "God damn them all! I never once succeeded in finding among them any holiness, any devotion, any good works; but, on the contrary, luxurious living, avarice, greed, fraud, envy, pride, and even worse, if there is worse; all the machine seemed to be set in motion by an impulse

less divine than diabolical. After what I saw, it is my firm conviction that your pope, and of course the others as well, are using all their talents, art, endeavours, to banish the Christian religion from the face of the earth, though they ought to be its foundation and support; and since, in spite of all the care and trouble they expend to arrive at this end, I see that your religion is spreading every day and becoming more brilliant and more pure, it is borne in upon me that the Holy Spirit Himself protects it as the only true and the most holy religion; this is why, deaf as you found me to your counsel and rebellious to your wish, I am now, ever since I returned from this Sodom, firmly resolved on becoming a Christian. So let us go at once to the church, for I am quite ready to be baptized."

There is no need to say if Jean de Civigny, who expected a refusal, was pleased at this consent. Without delay he went with his godson to Nôtre Dame de Paris, where he prayed the first priest he met to administer baptism to his friend, and this was speedily done; and the new convert changed his Jewish name of Abraham into the Christian name of Jean; and as the neophyte, thanks to his journey to Rome, had gained a profound belief, his natural good qualities increased so greatly in the practice of our holy religion, that after leading an exemplary life he died in the full odour of sanctity.

This tale of Boccaccio's gives so admirable an answer to the charge of irreligion which some might make against us if they mistook our intentions, that as we shall not offer any other reply, we have not hesitated to present it entire as it stands to the eyes of our readers.

And let us never forget that if the papacy has had an Innocent VIII and an Alexander VI who are its shame, it has also had a Pius VII and a Gregory XVI who are its honour and glory.

THE CENCI

THE CENCI

1598

SHOULD you ever go to Rome and visit the villa Pamphili, no doubt, after having sought under its tall pines and along its canals the shade and freshness so rare in the capital of the Christian world, you will descend towards the Janiculum Hill by a charming road, in the middle of which you will find the Pauline fountain. Having passed this monument, and having lingered a moment on the terrace of the church of St. Peter Montorio, which commands the whole of Rome, you will visit the cloister of Bramante, in the middle of which, sunk a few feet below the level, is built, on the identical place where St. Peter was crucified, a little temple, half Greek, half Christian; you will thence ascend by a side door into the church itself. There, the attentive cicerone will show you, in the first chapel to the right, the Christ Scourged, by Sebastian del Piombo, and in the third chapel to the left, an Entombment by Fiammingo; having examined these two masterpieces at leisure, he will take you to each end of the transverse cross, and will show you—on one side a picture by Salviati, on slate, and on the other a work by Vasari; then, pointing out in melancholy tones a copy of Guido's Martyrdom of St. Peter on the high altar, he will relate to you how for three centuries the divine Raffaelle's Transfiguration was worshipped in that spot; how it was carried away by the French in 1809, and restored to the pope by the Allies in 1814. As you have already in all probability admired this masterpiece in the Vatican, allow him to expatiate, and search at the foot of the altar for a mortuary slab, which you will identify by a cross and the single word, *Orate*; under this

gravestone is buried Beatrice Cenci, whose tragical story cannot but impress you profoundly.

She was the daughter of Francesco Cenci. Whether or not it be true that men are born in harmony with their epoch, and that some embody its good qualities and others its bad ones, it may nevertheless interest our readers to cast a rapid glance over the period which had just passed when the events which we are about to relate took place. Francesco Cenci will then appear to them as the diabolical incarnation of his time.

On the 11th of August 1492, after the lingering death-agony of Innocent VIII, during which two hundred and twenty murders were committed in the streets of Rome, Alexander VI ascended the pontifical throne. Son of a sister of Pope Calixtus III, Roderigo Lenzuoli Borgia, before being created cardinal, had five children by Rosa Vanozza, whom he afterwards caused to be married to a rich Roman. These children were—

Francis, Duke of Gandia;

Cæsar, bishop and cardinal, afterwards Duke of Valentinois;

Lucrezia, who was married four times: her first husband was Giovanni Sforza, lord of Pesaro, whom she left owing to his impotence; the second, Alfonso, Duke of Bisiglia, whom her brother Cæsar caused to be assassinated; the third, Alfonso d'Este, Duke of Ferrara, from whom a second divorce separated her; finally, the fourth, Alfonso of Aragon, who was stabbed to death on the steps of the basilica of St. Peter, and afterwards, three weeks later, strangled, because he did not die soon enough from his wounds, which nevertheless were mortal;

Giofre, Count of Squillace, of whom little is known;

And, finally, a youngest son, of whom nothing at all is known.

The most famous of these three brothers was Cæsar Borgia. He had made every arrangement a plotter could make to be King of Italy at the death of his father the pope, and his measures were so carefully taken as to leave no doubt in his own mind as to the success of this vast project. Every chance was provided against, except one; but Satan himself could hardly have foreseen this particular one. The reader will judge for himself.

The pope had invited Cardinal Adrien to supper in his vineyard on the Belvidere; Cardinal Adrien was very rich, and the pope wished to inherit his wealth, as he already had acquired that of the Cardinals of Sant' Angelo, Capua, and Modena. To effect this, Cæsar Borgia sent two bottles of poisoned wine to his father's cup-bearer, without taking him into his confidence; he only instructed him not to serve this wine till he himself gave orders to do so; unfortunately, during supper the cup-bearer left his post for a moment, and in this interval a careless butler served the poisoned wine to the pope, to Cæsar Borgia, and to Cardinal Corneto.

Alexander VI died some hours afterwards; Cæsar Borgia was confined to bed, and sloughed off his skin; while Cardinal Corneto lost his sight and his senses, and was brought to death's door.

Pius III succeeded Alexander VI, and reigned twenty-five days; on the twenty-sixth he was poisoned also.

Cæsar Borgia had under his control eighteen Spanish cardinals who owed to him their places in the Sacred College; these cardinals were entirely his creatures, and he could command them absolutely. As he was in a moribund condition and could make no use of them for himself, he sold them to Giuliano della Rovere, and Giuliano della Rovere was elected pope, under the name of Julius II. To the Rome of Nero succeeded the Athens of Pericles.

Leo X succeeded Julius II, and under his pontificate Christianity assumed a pagan character, which, passing from art into manners, gives to this epoch a strange complexion. Crimes for the moment disappeared, to give place to vices; but to charming vices, vices in good taste, such as those indulged in by Alcibiades and sung by Catullus. Leo X died after having assembled under his reign, which lasted eight years, eight months, and nineteen days, Michael Angelo, Raffaelle, Leonardo da Vinci, Correggio, Titian, Andrea del Sarto, Fra Bartolommeo, Giulio Romano, Ariosto, Guicciardini, and Macchiavelli.

Giulio di Medici and Pompeo Colonna had equal claims to succeed him. As both were skilful politicians, experienced

courtiers, and moreover of real and almost equal merit, neither of them could obtain a majority, and the Conclave was prolonged almost indefinitely, to the great fatigue of the cardinals. So it happened one day that a cardinal, more tired than the rest, proposed to elect, instead of either Medici or Colonna, the son, some say of a weaver, others of a brewer of Utrecht, of whom no one had ever thought till then, and who was for the moment acting head of affairs in Spain, in the absence of Charles the Fifth. The jest prospered in the ears of those who heard it; all the cardinals approved their colleague's proposal, and Adrien became pope by a mere accident.

He was a perfect specimen of the Flemish type, a regular Dutchman, and could not speak a word of Italian. When he arrived in Rome, and saw the Greek masterpieces of sculpture collected at vast cost by Leo X, he wished to break them to pieces, exclaiming, "*Sunt idola anticorum.*" His first act was to despatch a papal nuncio, Francesco Cherigato, to the Diet of Nuremberg, convened to discuss the reforms of Luther, with instructions which give a vivid notion of the manners of the time.

"Candidly confess," said he, "that God has permitted this schism and this persecution on account of the sins of man, and especially those of priests and prelates of the Church; for we know that many abominable things have taken place in the Holy See."

Adrien wished to bring the Romans back to the simple and austere manners of the early Church, and with this object pushed reform to the minutest details. For instance, of the hundred grooms maintained by Leo X, he retained only a dozen, in order, he said, to have two more than the cardinals.

A pope like this could not reign long: he died after a year's pontificate. The morning after his death his physician's door was found decorated with garlands of flowers, bearing this inscription: "To the liberator of his country."

Giulio di Medici and Pompeo Colonna were again rival candidates. Intrigues recommenced, and the Conclave was once more so divided that at one time the cardinals thought they

could only escape the difficulty in which they were placed by doing what they had done before, and electing a third competitor; they were even talking about Cardinal Orsini, when Giulio di Medici, one of the rival candidates, hit upon a very ingenious expedient. He wanted only five votes; five of his partisans each offered to bet five of Colonna's a hundred thousand ducats to ten thousand, against the election of Giulio di Medici. At the very first ballot after the wager, Giulio di Medici got the five votes he wanted: no objection could be made, the cardinals had not been bribed; they had made a bet, that was all.

Thus it happened, on the 18th of November 1523, Giulio di Medici was proclaimed pope under the name of Clement VII. The same day, he generously paid the five hundred thousand ducats which his five partisans had lost.

It was under this pontificate, and during the seven months in which Rome, conquered by the Lutheran soldiers of the Constable of Bourbon, saw holy things subjected to the most frightful profanations, that Francesco Cenci was born.

He was the son of Monsignor Nicolo Cenci, afterwards apostolic treasurer during the pontificate of Pius V. Under this venerable prelate, who occupied himself much more with the spiritual than the temporal administration of his kingdom, Nicolo Cenci took advantage of his spiritual head's abstraction of worldly matters to amass a net revenue of a hundred and sixty thousand piastres, about £32,000 of our money. Francesco Cenci, who was his only son, inherited this fortune.

His youth was spent under popes so occupied with the schism of Luther that they had no time to think of anything else. The result was, that Francesco Cenci, inheriting vicious instincts and master of an immense fortune which enabled him to purchase impunity, abandoned himself to all the evil passions of his fiery and passionate temperament. Five times during his profligate career imprisoned for abominable crimes, he only succeeded in procuring his liberation by the payment of two hundred thousand piastres, or about one million francs. It should be explained that popes at this time were in great need of money.

The lawless profligacy of Francesco Cenci first began seriously

to attract public attention under the pontificate of Gregory XIII. This reign offered marvellous facilities for the development of a reputation such as that which this reckless Italian Don Juan seemed bent on acquiring. Under the Bolognese Buoncampagno a free hand was given to those able to pay both assassins and judges. Rape and murder were so common that public justice scarcely troubled itself with these trifling things, if nobody appeared to prosecute the guilty parties. The good Gregory had his reward for his easy-going indulgence; he was spared to rejoice over the Massacre of St. Bartholomew.

Francesco Cenci was at the time of which we are speaking a man of forty-four or forty-five years of age, about five feet four inches in height, symmetrically proportioned, and very strong, although rather thin; his hair was streaked with grey, his eyes were large and expressive, although the upper eyelids drooped somewhat; his nose was long, his lips were thin, and wore habitually a pleasant smile, except when his eye perceived an enemy; at this moment his features assumed a terrible expression; on such occasions, and whenever moved or even slightly irritated, he was seized with a fit of nervous trembling, which lasted long after the cause which provoked it had passed. An adept in all manly exercises, and especially in horsemanship, he sometimes used to ride without stopping from Rome to Naples, a distance of forty-one leagues, passing through the forest of San Germano and the Pontine marshes heedless of brigands, although he might be alone and unarmed save for his sword and dagger. When his horse fell from fatigue, he bought another; were the owner unwilling to sell, he took it by force; if resistance were made, he struck, and always with the point, never the hilt. In most cases, being well known throughout the Papal States as a free-handed person, nobody tried to thwart him; some yielding through fear, others from motives of interest. Impious, sacrilegious, and atheistical, he never entered a church except to profane its sanctity. It was said of him that he had a morbid appetite for novelties in crime, and that there was no outrage he would not commit if he hoped by so doing to enjoy a new sensation.

At the age of about forty-five he had married a very rich woman, whose name is not mentioned by any chronicler. She died, leaving him seven children—five boys and two girls. He then married Lucrezia Petroni, a perfect beauty of the Roman type, except for the ivory pallor of her complexion. By this second marriage he had no children.

As if Francesco Cenci were void of all natural affection, he hated his children, and was at no pains to conceal his feelings towards them: on one occasion, when he was building, in the courtyard of his magnificent palace, near the Tiber, a chapel dedicated to St. Thomas, he remarked to the architect, when instructing him to design a family vault, "That is where I hope to bury them all." The architect often subsequently admitted that he was so terrified by the fiendish laugh which accompanied these words, that had not Francesco Cenci's work been extremely profitable, he would have refused to go on with it.

As soon as his three eldest boys, Giacomo, Cristoforo, and Rocco, were out of their tutors' hands, in order to get rid of them he sent them to the University of Salamanca, where, out of sight, they were out of mind, for he thought no more about them, and did not even send them the means of subsistence. In these straits, after struggling for some months against their wretched plight, the lads were obliged to leave Salamanca, and beg their way home, tramping barefoot through France and Italy, till they made their way back to Rome, where they found their father harsher and more unkind than ever.

This happened in the early part of the reign of Clement VIII, famed for his justice. The three youths resolved to apply to him, to grant them an allowance out of their father's immense income. They consequently repaired to Frascati, where the pope was building the beautiful Aldobrandini Villa, and stated their case. The pope admitted the justice of their claims, and ordered Francesco to allow each of them two thousand crowns a year. He endeavoured by every possible means to evade this decree, but the pope's orders were too stringent to be disobeyed.

About this period he was for the third time imprisoned for infamous crimes. His three sons then again petitioned the pope, alleging that their father dishonoured the family name, and praying that the extreme rigour of the law, a capital sentence, should be enforced in his case. The pope pronounced this conduct unnatural and odious, and drove them with ignominy from his presence. As for Francesco, he escaped, as on the two previous occasions, by the payment of a large sum of money.

It will be readily understood that his sons' conduct on this occasion did not improve their father's disposition towards them, but as their independent pensions enabled them to keep out of his way, his rage fell with all the greater intensity on his two unhappy daughters. Their situation soon became so intolerable, that the elder, contriving to elude the close supervision under which she was kept, forwarded to the pope a petition, relating the cruel treatment to which she was subjected, and praying His Holiness either to give her in marriage or place her in a convent. Clement VIII took pity on her; compelled Francesco Cenci to give her a dowry of sixty thousand crowns, and married her to Carlo Gabrielli, of a noble family of Gubbio. Francesco was driven nearly frantic with rage when he saw this victim released from his clutches.

About the same time death relieved him from two other encumbrances: his sons Rocco and Cristoforo were killed within a year of each other; the latter by a bungling medical practitioner whose name is unknown; the former by Paolo Corso di Massa, in the streets of Rome. This came as a relief to Francesco, whose avarice pursued his sons even after their death, for he intimated to the priest that he would not spend a farthing on funeral services. They were accordingly borne to the paupers' graves which he had caused to be prepared for them, and when he saw them both interred, he cried out that he was well rid of such good-for-nothing children, but that he should be perfectly happy only when the remaining five were buried with the first two, and that when he had got rid of the last he himself would burn down his palace as a bonfire to celebrate the event.

But Francesco took every precaution against his second

daughter, Beatrice Cenci, following the example of her elder sister. She was then a child of twelve or thirteen years of age, beautiful and innocent as an angel. Her long fair hair, a beauty seen so rarely in Italy, that Raffaelle, believing it divine, has appropriated it to all his Madonnas, curtained a lovely forehead, and fell in flowing locks over her shoulders. Her azure eyes bore a heavenly expression; she was of middle height, exquisitely proportioned; and during the rare moments when a gleam of happiness allowed her natural character to display itself, she was lively, joyous, and sympathetic, but at the same time evinced a firm and decided disposition.

To make sure of her custody, Francesco kept her shut up in a remote apartment of his palace, the key of which he kept in his own possession. There, her unnatural and inflexible gaoler daily brought her some food. Up to the age of thirteen, which she had now reached, he had behaved to her with the most extreme harshness and severity; but now, to poor Beatrice's great astonishment, he all at once became gentle and even tender. Beatrice was a child no longer; her beauty expanded like a flower; and Francesco, a stranger to no crime, however heinous, had marked her for his own.

Brought up as she had been, uneducated, deprived of all society, even that of her stepmother, Beatrice knew not good from evil: her ruin was comparatively easy to compass; yet Francesco, to accomplish his diabolical purpose, employed all the means at his command. Every night she was awakened by a concert of music which seemed to come from Paradise. When she mentioned this to her father, he left her in this belief, adding that if she proved gentle and obedient she would be rewarded by heavenly sights as well as heavenly sounds.

One night it came to pass that as the young girl was reposing, her head supported on her elbow, and listening to a delightful harmony, the chamber door suddenly opened, and from the darkness of her own room she beheld a suite of apartments brilliantly illuminated, and sensuous with perfumes; beautiful youths and girls, half clad, such as she had seen in the pictures of Guido and Raffaelle, moved to and fro in these

apartments, seeming full of joy and happiness: these were the ministers to the pleasures of Francesco, who, rich as a king, every night revelled in the orgies of Alexander, the wedding revels of Lucrezia, and the excesses of Tiberius at Capri. After an hour, the door closed, and the seductive vision vanished, leaving Beatrice full of trouble and amazement.

The night following, the same apparition again presented itself, only, on this occasion, Francesco Cenci, undressed, entered his daughter's room and invited her to join the fête. Hardly knowing what she did, Beatrice yet perceived the impropriety of yielding to her father's wishes: she replied that, not seeing her stepmother, Lucrezia Petroni, among all these women, she dared not leave her bed to mix with persons who were unknown to her. Francesco threatened and prayed, but threats and prayers were of no avail. Beatrice wrapped herself up in the bedclothes, and obstinately refused to obey.

The next night she threw herself on her bed without undressing. At the accustomed hour the door opened, and the nocturnal spectacle reappeared. This time, Lucrezia Petroni was among the women who passed before Beatrice's door; violence had compelled her to undergo this humiliation. Beatrice was too far off to see her blushes and her tears. Francesco pointed out her stepmother, whom she had looked for in vain the previous evening; and as she could no longer make any opposition, he led her, covered with blushes and confusion, into the middle of this orgy.

Beatrice there saw incredible and infamous things. . . .

Nevertheless, she resisted a long time: an inward voice told her that this was horrible; but Francesco had the slow persistence of a demon. To these sights, calculated to stimulate her passions, he added heresies designed to warp her mind; he told her that the greatest saints venerated by the Church were the issue of fathers and daughters, and in the end Beatrice committed a crime without even knowing it to be a sin.

His brutality then knew no bounds. He forced Lucrezia and Beatrice to share the same bed, threatening his wife to kill her if she disclosed to his daughter by a single word that

there was anything odious in such an intercourse. So matters went on for about three years.

At this time Francesco was obliged to make a journey, and leave the women alone and free. The first thing Lucrezia did was to enlighten Beatrice on the infamy of the life they were leading; they then together prepared a memorial to the pope, in which they laid before him a statement of all the blows and outrages they had suffered. But, before leaving, Francesco Cenci had taken precautions; every person about the pope was in his pay, or hoped to be. The petition never reached His Holiness, and the two poor women, remembering that Clement VIII had on a former occasion driven Giacomo, Cristoforo, and Rocco from his presence, thought they were included in the same proscription, and looked upon themselves as abandoned to their fate.

When matters were in this state, Giacomo, taking advantage of his father's absence, came to pay them a visit with a friend of his, an abbé named Guerra: he was a young man of twenty-five or twenty-six, belonging to one of the most noble families in Rome, of a bold, resolute, and courageous character, and idolised by all the Roman ladies for his beauty. To classical features he added blue eyes swimming in poetic sentiment; his hair was long and fair, with chestnut beard and eyebrows; add to these attractions a highly educated mind, natural eloquence expressed by a musical and penetrating voice, and the reader may form some idea of Monsignor the Abbé Guerra.

No sooner had he seen Beatrice than he fell in love with her. On her side, she was not slow to return the sympathy of the young priest. The Council of Trent had not been held at that time, consequently ecclesiastics were not precluded from marriage. It was therefore decided that on the return of Francesco the Abbé Guerra should demand the hand of Beatrice from her father, and the women, happy in the absence of their master, continued to live on, hoping for better things to come.

After three or four months, during which no one knew where he was, Francesco returned. The very first night, he wished

to resume his intercourse with Beatrice; but she was no longer the same person, the timid and submissive child had become a girl of decided will; strong in her love for the abbé, she resisted alike prayers, threats, and blows.

The wrath of Francesco fell upon his wife, whom he accused of betraying him; he gave her a violent thrashing. Lucrezia Petroni was a veritable Roman she-wolf, passionate alike in love and vengeance; she endured all, but pardoned nothing.

Some days after this, the Abbé Guerra arrived at the Cenci palace to carry out what had been arranged. Rich, young, noble, and handsome, everything would seem to promise him success; yet he was rudely dismissed by Francesco. The first refusal did not daunt him; he returned to the charge a second time and yet a third, insisting upon the suitableness of such a union. At length Francesco, losing patience, told this obstinate lover that a reason existed why Beatrice could be neither his wife nor any other man's. Guerra demanded what this reason was. Francesco replied—

"Because she is my mistress."

Monsignor Guerra turned pale at this answer, although at first he did not believe a word of it; but when he saw the smile with which Francesco Cenci accompanied his words, he was compelled to believe that, terrible though it was, the truth had been spoken.

For three days he sought an interview with Beatrice in vain; at length he succeeded in finding her. His last hope was her denial of this horrible story: Beatrice confessed all. Henceforth there was no human hope for the two lovers; an impassable gulf separated them. They parted bathed in tears, promising to love one another always.

Up to that time the two women had not formed any criminal resoultion, and possibly the tragical incident might never have happened, had not Francesco one night returned into his daughter's room and violently forced her into the commission of fresh crime. Henceforth the doom of Francesco was irrevocably pronounced.

As we have said, the mind of Beatrice was susceptible to the

best and the worst influences: it could attain excellence, and descend to guilt. She went and told her mother of the fresh outrage she had undergone; this roused in the heart of the other woman the sting of her own wrongs; and, stimulating each other's desire for revenge, they decided upon the murder of Francesco.

Guerra was called in to this council of death. His heart was a prey to hatred and revenge. He undertook to communicate with Giacomo Cenci, without whose concurrence the women would not act, as he was the head of the family, when his father was left out of account.

Giacomo entered readily into the conspiracy. It will be remembered what he had formerly suffered from his father; since that time he had married, and the close-fisted old man had left him, with his wife and children, to languish in poverty. Guerra's house was selected to meet in and concert matters. Giacomo hired a sbirro named Marzio, and Guerra a second named Olympio.

Both these men had private reasons for committing the crime—one being actuated by love, the other by hatred. Marzio, who was in the service of Giacomo, had often seen Beatrice, and loved her, but with that silent and hopeless love which devours the soul. When he conceived that the proposed crime would draw him nearer to Beatrice, he accepted his part in it without any demur.

As for Olympio, he hated Francesco, because the latter had caused him to lose the post of castellan of Rocco Petrella, a fortified stronghold in the kingdom of Naples, belonging to Prince Colonna. Almost every year Francesco Cenci spent some months at Rocco Petrella with his family; for Prince Colonna, a noble and magnificent but needy prince, had much esteem for Francesco, whose purse he found extremely useful. It had so happened that Francesco, being dissatisfied with Olympio, complained about him to Prince Colonna, and he was dismissed.

After several consultations between the Cenci family, the abbé and the sbirri, the following plan of action was decided upon.

The period when Francesco Cenci was accustomed to go to Rocco Petrella was approaching: it was arranged that Olympio, conversant with the district and its inhabitants, should collect a party of a dozen Neapolitan bandits, and conceal them in a forest through which the travellers would have to pass. Upon a given signal, the whole family were to be seized and carried off. A heavy ransom was to be demanded, and the sons were to be sent back to Rome to raise the sum; but, under pretext of inability to do so, they were to allow the time fixed by the bandits to lapse, when Francesco was to be put to death. Thus all suspicions of a plot would be avoided, and the real assassins would escape justice.

This well devised scheme was nevertheless unsuccessful. When Francesco left Rome, the scout sent in advance by the conspirators could not find the bandits; the latter, not being warned beforehand, failed to come down before the passage of the travellers, who arrived safe and sound at Rocco Petrella. The bandits, after having patrolled the road in vain, came to the conclusion that their prey had escaped, and, unwilling to stay any longer in a place where they had already spent a week, went off in quest of better luck elsewhere.

Francesco had in the meantime settled down in the fortress, and, to be more free to tyrannise over Lucrezia and Beatrice, sent back to Rome Giacomo and his two other sons. He then recommenced his infamous attempts upon Beatrice, and with such persistence, that she resolved herself to accomplish the deed which at first she desired to entrust to other hands.

Olympio and Marzio, who had nothing to fear from justice, remained lurking about the castle; one day Beatrice saw them from a window, and made signs that she had something to communicate to them. The same night Olympio, who having been castellan knew all the approaches to the fortress, made his way there with his companion. Beatrice awaited them at a window which looked on to a secluded courtyard; she gave them letters which she had written to her brother and to Monsignor Guerra. The former was to approve, as he had done before, the murder of their father; for she would do

nothing without his sanction. As for Monsignor Guerra, he was to pay Olympio a thousand piastres, half the stipulated sum; Marzio acting out of pure love for Beatrice, whom he worshipped as a Madonna; which observing, the girl gave him a handsome scarlet mantle, trimmed with gold lace, telling him to wear it for love of her. As for the remaining moiety, it was to be paid when the death of the old man had placed his wife and daughter in possession of his fortune.

The two sbirri departed, and the imprisoned conspirators anxiously awaited their return. On the day fixed, they were seen again. Monsignor Guerra had paid the thousand piastres, and Giacomo had given his consent. Nothing now stood in the way of the execution of this terrible deed, which was fixed for the 8th of September, the day of the Nativity of the Virgin; but Signora Lucrezia, a very devout person, having noticed this circumstance, would not be a party to the committal of a double sin; the matter was therefore deferred till the next day, the 9th.

That evening, the 9th of September 1598, the two women, supping with the old man, mixed some narcotic with his wine so adroitly that, suspicious though he was, he never detected it, and having swallowed the potion, soon fell into a deep sleep.

The evening previous, Marzio and Olympio had been admitted into the castle, where they had lain concealed all night and all day; for, as will be remembered, the assassination would have been effected the day before had it not been for the religious scruples of Signora Lucrezia Petroni. Towards midnight, Beatrice fetched them out of their hiding-place, and took them to her father's chamber, the door of which she herself opened. The assassins entered, and the two women awaited the issue in the room adjoining.

After a moment, seeing the sbirri reappear pale and nerveless, shaking their heads without speaking, they at once inferred that nothing had been done.

"What is the matter?" cried Beatrice; "and what hinders you?"

"It is a cowardly act," replied the assassins, "to kill a poor

old man in his sleep. At the thought of his age, we were struck with pity."

Then Beatrice disdainfully raised her head, and in a deep firm voice thus reproached them:—

"Is it possible that you, who pretend to be brave and strong, have not courage enough to kill a sleeping old man? How would it be if he were awake? And thus you steal our money! Very well: since your cowardice compels me to do so, I will kill my father myself; but you will not long survive him."

Hearing these words, the sbirri felt ashamed of their irresolution, and, indicating by signs that they would fulfil their compact, they entered the room, accompanied by the two women. As they had said, a ray of moonlight shone through the open window, and brought into prominence the tranquil face of the old man, the sight of whose white hair had so affected them.

This time they showed no mercy. One of them carried two great nails, such as those portrayed in pictures of the Crucifixion; the other bore a mallet: the first placed a nail upright over one of the old man's eyes; the other struck it with the hammer, and drove it into his head. The throat was pierced in the same way with the second nail; and thus the guilty soul, stained throughout its career with crimes of violence, was in its turn violently torn from the body, which lay writhing on the floor where it had rolled.

The young girl then, faithful to her word, handed the sbirri a large purse containing the rest of the sum agreed upon, and they left.

When they found themselves alone, the women drew the nails out of the wounds, wrapped the corpse in a sheet, and dragged it through the rooms towards a small rampart, intending to throw it down into a garden which had been allowed to run to waste. They hoped that the old man's death would be attributed to his having accidentally fallen off the terrace on his way in the dark to a closet at the end of the gallery. But their strength failed them when they reached the door of the last room, and, while resting there, Lucrezia perceived the two

Bourdet, del. *Langlois, sculp.*

THE CENCIS THROWING THE BODY OF THEIR FATHER FROM THE SUMMIT OF THE TOWER OF ROCCA PETRELLA

sbirri, sharing the money before making their escape. At her call they came to her, carried the corpse to the rampart, and, from a spot pointed out by the women, where the terrace was unfenced by any parapet, they threw it into an elder tree below, whose branches retained it suspended.

When the body was found the following morning hanging in the branches of the elder tree, everybody supposed, as Beatrice and her stepmother had foreseen, that Francesco, stepping over the edge of the terrace in the dark, had thus met his end. The body was so scratched and disfigured that no one noticed the wounds made by the two nails. The ladies, as soon as the news was imparted to them, came out from their rooms, weeping and lamenting in so natural a manner as to disarm any suspicions. The only person who formed any was the laundress to whom Beatrice entrusted the sheet in which her father's body had been wrapped, accounting for its bloody condition by a lame explanation, which the laundress accepted without question, or pretended to do so; and immediately after the funeral, the mourners returned to Rome, hoping at length to enjoy quietude and peace.

For some time, indeed, they did enjoy tranquillity, perhaps poisoned by remorse, but ere long retribution pursued them. The court of Naples, hearing of the sudden and unexpected death of Francesco Cenci, and conceiving some suspicions of violence, despatched a royal commissioner to Petrella to exhume the body and make minute inquiries, if there appeared to be adequate grounds for doing so. On his arrival all the domestics in the castle were placed under arrest and sent in chains to Naples. No incriminating proofs, however, were found, except in the evidence of the laundress, who deposed that Beatrice had given her a bloodstained sheet to wash. This clue led to terrible consequences; for, further questioned, she declared that she could not believe the explanation given to account for its condition. The evidence was sent to the Roman court; but at that period it did not appear strong enough to warrant the arrest of the Cenci family, who remained undisturbed for many months, during which time the youngest

boy died. Of the five brothers there only remained Giacomo, the eldest, and Bernardo, the youngest but one. Nothing prevented them from escaping to Venice or Florence; but they remained quietly in Rome.

Meantime Monsignor Guerra received private information that, shortly before the death of Francesco, Marzio and Olympio had been seen prowling round the castle, and that the Neapolitan police had received orders to arrest them.

The monsignor was a most wary man, and very difficult to catch napping when warned in time. He immediately hired two other sbirri to assassinate Marzio and Olympio. The one commissioned to put Olympio out of the way came across him at Terni, and conscientiously did his work with a poniard, but Marzio's man unfortunately arrived at Naples too late, and found his bird already in the hands of the police.

He was put to the torture, and confessed everything. His deposition was sent to Rome, whither he shortly afterwards followed it, to be confronted with the accused. Warrants were immediately issued for the arrest of Giacomo, Bernardo, Lucrezia, and Beatrice; they were at first confined in the Cenci palace under a strong guard, but the proofs against them becoming stronger and stronger, they were removed to the castle of Corte Savella, where they were confronted with Marzio; but they obstinately denied both any complicity in the crime and any knowledge of the assassin. Beatrice, above all, displayed the greatest assurance, demanding to be the first to be confronted with Marzio, whose mendacity she affirmed with such calm dignity, that he, more than ever smitten by her beauty, determined, since he could not live for her, to save her by his death. Consequently, he declared all his statements to be false, and asked forgiveness from God and from Beatrice; neither threats nor tortures could make him recant, and he died firm in his denial, under frightful tortures. The Cenci then thought themselves safe.

God's justice, however, still pursued them. The sbirro who had killed Olympio happened to be arrested for another crime, and, making a clean breast, confessed that he had been employed

by Monsignor Guerra to put out of the way a fellow-assassin named Olympio, who knew too many of the monsignor's secrets.

Luckily for himself, Monsignor Guerra heard of this opportunely. A man of infinite resource, he lost not a moment in timid or irresolute plans, but as it happened that at the very moment when he was warned, the charcoal dealer who supplied his house with fuel was at hand, he sent for him, purchased his silence with a handsome bribe, and then, buying for almost their weight in gold the dirty old clothes which he wore, he assumed these, cut off all his beautiful cherished fair hair, stained his beard, smudged his face, bought two asses, laden with charcoal, and limped up and down the streets of Rome, crying, "Charcoal! charcoal!" Then, whilst all the detectives were hunting high and low for him, he got out of the city, met a company of merchants under escort, joined them, and reached Naples, where he embarked. What ultimately became of him was never known; it has been asserted, but without confirmation, that he succeeded in reaching France, and enlisted in a Swiss regiment in the pay of Henry IV.

The confession of the sbirro and the disappearance of Monsignor Guerra left no moral doubt of the guilt of the Cenci. They were consequently sent from the castle to the prison; the two brothers, when put to the torture, broke down and confessed their guilt. Lucrezia Petroni's full habit of body rendered her unable to bear the torture of the rope, and on being suspended in the air begged to be lowered, when she confessed all she knew.

As for Beatrice, she continued unmoved; neither promises threats, nor torture had any effect upon her; she bore everything unflinchingly, and the judge Ulysse Moscati himself, famous though he was in such matters, failed to draw from her a single incriminating word. Unwilling to take any further responsibility, he referred the case to Clement VIII; and the pope, conjecturing that the judge had been too lenient in applying the torture to a young and beautiful noble Roman lady, took it out of his hands and entrusted it to another judge, whose severity and insensibility to emotion were undisputed.

This latter reopened the whole interrogatory, and as Beatrice up to that time had only been subjected to the ordinary torture, he gave instructions to apply both the ordinary and extra-ordinary. This was the rope and pulley, one of the most terrible inventions ever devised by the most ingenious of tormentors.

To make the nature of this horrid torture plain to our readers, we give a detailed description of it, adding an extract of the presiding judge's report of the case, taken from the Vatican manuscripts.

Of the various forms of torture then used in Rome the most common were the whistle, the fire, the sleepless, and the rope.

The mildest, the torture of the whistle, was used only in the case of children and old persons; it consisted in thrusting between the nails and the flesh reeds cut in the shape of whistles.

The fire, frequently employed before the invention of the sleepless torture, was simply roasting the soles of the feet before a hot fire.

The sleepless torture, invented by Marsilius, was worked by forcing the accused into an angular frame of wood about five feet high, the sufferer being stripped and his arms tied behind his back to the frame; two men, relieved every five hours, sat beside him, and roused him the moment he closed his eyes. Marsilius says he has never found a man proof against this torture; but here he claims more than he is justly entitled to. Farinacci states that, out of one hundred accused persons subjected to it, five only refused to confess—a very satisfactory result for the inventor.

Lastly comes the torture of the rope and pulley, the most in vogue of all, and known in other Latin countries as the strappado.

It was divided into three degrees of intensity—the slight, the severe, and the very severe.

The first, or slight torture, which consisted mainly in the apprehensions it caused, comprised the threat of severe torture, introduction into the torture chamber, stripping, and the tying of the rope in readiness for its appliance. To increase the terror these preliminaries excited, a pang of physical pain was added

by tightening a cord round the wrists. This often sufficed to extract a confession from women or men of highly strung nerves.

The second degree, or severe torture, consisted in fastening the sufferer, stripped naked, and his hands tied behind his back, by the wrists to one end of a rope passed round a pulley bolted into the vaulted ceiling, the other end being attached to a windlass, by turning which he could be hoisted into the air, and dropped again, either slowly or with a jerk, as ordered by the judge. The suspension generally lasted during the recital of a Pater Noster, an Ave Maria, or a Miserere; if the accused persisted in his denial, it was doubled. This second degree, the last of the ordinary torture, was put in practice when the crime appeared reasonably probable but was not absolutely proved.

The third, or very severe, the first of the extraordinary forms of torture, was so called when the sufferer, having hung suspended by the wrists, for sometimes a whole hour, was swung about by the executioner, either like the pendulum of a clock, or by elevating him with the windlass and dropping him to within a foot or two of the ground. If he stood this torture, a thing almost unheard of, seeing that it cut the flesh of the wrist to the bone and dislocated the limbs, weights were attached to the feet, thus doubling the torture. This last form of torture was only applied when an atrocious crime had been proved to have been committed upon a sacred person, such as a priest, a cardinal, a prince, or an eminent and learned man.

Having seen that Beatrice was sentenced to the torture ordinary and extraordinary, and having explained the nature of these tortures, we proceed to quote the official report:—

"And as in reply to every question she would confess nothing, we caused her to be taken by two officers and led from the prison to the torture chamber, where the torturer was in attendance; there, after cutting off her hair, he made her sit on a small stool, undressed her, pulled off her shoes, tied her hands behind her back, fastened them to a rope passed over a pulley bolted into the ceiling of the aforesaid chamber, and wound up at the other end by a four lever windlass, worked by two men.

"Before hoisting her from the ground we again interrogated her touching the aforesaid parricide; but notwithstanding the confessions of her brother and her stepmother, which were again produced, bearing their signatures, she persisted in denying everything, saying, 'Haul me about and do what you like with me; I have spoken the truth, and will tell you nothing else, even if I were torn to pieces.'

"Upon this we had her hoisted in the air by the wrists to the height of about two feet from the ground, while we recited a Pater Noster; and then again questioned her as to the facts and circumstances of the aforesaid parricide; but she would make no further answer, only saying, 'You are killing me! You are killing me!'

"We then raised her to the elevation of four feet, and began an Ave Maria. But before our prayer was half finished she fainted away, or pretended to do so.

"We caused a bucketful of water to be thrown over her head; feeling its coolness, she recovered consciousness, and cried, 'My God! I am dead! You are killing me! My God!' But this was all she would say.

"We then raised her higher still, and recited a Miserere, during which, instead of joining in the prayer, she shook convulsively and cried several times, 'My God! My God!'

"Again questioned as to the aforesaid parricide, she would confess nothing, saying only that she was innocent, and then again fainted away.

"We caused more water to be thrown over her; then she recovered her senses, opened her eyes, and cried, 'O cursed executioners! You are killing me! You are killing me!' But nothing more would she say.

"Seeing which, and that she persisted in her denial, we ordered the torturer to proceed to the torture by jerks.

"He accordingly hoisted her ten feet from the ground, and when there we enjoined her to tell the truth; but whether she would not or could not speak, she answered only by a motion of the head indicating that she could say nothing.

"Seeing which, we made a sign to the executioner to let go

the rope, and she fell with all her weight from the height of ten feet to that of two feet; her arms, from the shock, were dislocated from their sockets; she uttered a loud cry, and swooned away.

"We again caused water to be dashed in her face; she returned to herself, and again cried out, 'Infamous assassins! You are killing me; but were you to tear out my arms, I would tell you nothing else.'

"Upon this, we ordered a weight of fifty pounds to be fastened to her feet. But at this moment the door opened, and many voices cried, 'Enough! Enough! Do not torture her any more!'"

These voices were those of Giacomo, Bernardo, and Lucrezia Petroni. The judges, perceiving the obstinacy of Beatrice, had ordered that the accused, who had been separated for five months, should be confronted.

They advanced into the torture chamber, and seeing Beatrice hanging by the wrists, her arms disjointed, and covered with blood, Giacomo cried out—

"The sin is committed; nothing further remains but to save our souls by repentance, undergo death courageously, and not suffer you to be thus tortured."

Then said Beatrice, shaking her head as if to cast off grief—

"Do you then wish to die? Since you wish it, be it so."

Then turning to the officers—

"Untie me," said she, "read the examination to me; and what I have to confess, I will confess; what I have to deny, I will deny."

Beatrice was then lowered and untied; a barber reduced the dislocation of her arms in the usual manner; the examination was read over to her, and, as she had promised, she made a full confession.

After this confession, at the request of the two brothers, they were all confined in the same prison; but the next day Giacomo and Bernardo were taken to the cells of Tordinona; as for the women, they remained where they were.

The pope was so horrified on reading the particulars of the

crime contained in the confessions, that he ordered the culprits to be dragged by wild horses through the streets of Rome. But so barbarous a sentence shocked the public mind, so much so that many persons of princely rank petitioned the Holy Father on their knees, imploring him to reconsider his decree, or at least allow the accused to be heard in their defence.

"Tell me," replied Clement VIII, "did they give their unhappy father time to be heard in his own defence, when they slew him in so merciless and degrading a fashion?"

At length, overcome by so many entreaties, he respited them for three days.

The most eloquent and skilful advocates in Rome immediately busied themselves in preparing pleadings for so emotional a case, and on the day fixed for hearing appeared before His Holiness.

The first pleader was Nicolo degli Angeli, who spoke with such force and eloquence that the pope, alarmed at the effect he was producing among the audience, passionately interrupted him.

"Are there then to be found," he indignantly cried, "among the Roman nobility children capable of killing their parents, and among Roman lawyers men capable of speaking in their defence? This is a thing we should never have believed, nor even for a moment supposed it possible!"

All were silent upon this terrible rebuke, except Farinacci, who, nerving himself with a strong sense of duty, replied respectfully but firmly—

"Most Holy Father, we are not here to defend criminals, but to save the innocent; for if we succeeded in proving that any of the accused acted in self-defence, I hope that they will be exonerated in the eyes of your Holiness; for just as the law provides for cases in which the father may legally kill the child, so this holds good in the converse. We will therefore continue our pleadings on receiving leave from your Holiness to do so."

Clement VIII then showed himself as patient as he had previously been hasty, and heard the argument of Farinacci,

who pleaded that Francesco Cenci had lost all the rights of a father from the day that he violated his daughter. In support of his contention he wished to put in the memorial sent by Beatrice to His Holiness, petitioning him, as her sister had done, to remove her from the paternal roof and place her in a convent. Unfortunately, this petition had disappeared, and notwithstanding the minutest search among the papal documents, no trace of it could be found.

The pope had all the pleadings collected, and dismissed the advocates, who then retired, excepting d'Altieri, who knelt before him, saying—

"Most Holy Father, I humbly ask pardon for appearing before you in this case, but I had no choice in the matter, being the advocate of the poor."

The pope kindly raised him, saying—

"Go; we are not surprised at your conduct, but at that of others, who protect and defend criminals."

As the pope took a great interest in this case, he sat up all night over it, studying it with Cardinal di San Marcello, a man of much acumen and great experience in criminal cases. Then, having summed it up, he sent a draft of his opinion to the advocates, who read it with great satisfaction, and entertained hopes that the lives of the convicted persons would be spared; for the evidence all went to prove that even if the children had taken their father's life, all the provocation came from him, and that Beatrice in particular had been dragged into the part she had taken in this crime by the tyranny, wickedness, and brutality of her father. Under the influence of these considerations the pope mitigated the severity of their prison life, and even allowed the prisoners to hope that their lives would not be forfeited.

Amidst the general feeling of relief afforded to the public by these favours, another tragical event changed the papal mind and frustrated all his humane intentions. This was the atrocious murder of the Marchese di Santa Croce, a man seventy years of age, by his son Paolo, who stabbed him with a dagger in fifteen or twenty places, because the father would

not promise to make Paolo his sole heir. The murderer fled and escaped.

Clement VIII was horror-stricken at the increasing frequency of this crime of parricide: for the moment, however, he was unable to take action, having to go to Monte Cavallo to consecrate a cardinal titular bishop in the church of Santa Maria degli Angeli; but the day following, on Friday the 10th of September 1599, at eight o'clock in the morning, he summoned Monsignor Taverna, governor of Rome, and said to him—

"Monsignor, we place in your hands the Cenci case, that you may carry out the sentence as speedily as possible."

On his return to his palace, after leaving His Holiness, the governor convened a meeting of all the criminal judges in the city, the result of the council being that all the Cenci were condemned to death.

The final sentence was immediately known; and as this unhappy family inspired a constantly increasing interest, many cardinals spent the whole of the night either on horseback or in their carriages, making interest that, at least so far as the women were concerned, they should be put to death privately and in the prison, and that a free pardon should be granted to Bernardo, a poor lad only fifteen years of age, who, guiltless of any participation in the crime, yet found himself involved in its consequences. The one who interested himself most in the case was Cardinal Sforza, who nevertheless failed to elicit a single gleam of hope, so obdurate was His Holiness. At length Farinacci, working on the papal conscience, succeeded, after long and urgent entreaties, and only at the last moment, that the life of Bernardo should be spared.

From Friday evening the members of the brotherhood of the Conforteria had gathered at the two prisons of Corte Savella and Tordinona. The preparations for the closing scene of the tragedy had occupied workmen on the bridge of Sant' Angelo all night; and it was not till five o'clock in the morning that the registrar entered the cell of Lucrezia and Beatrice to read their sentences to them.

Both were sleeping, calm in the belief of a reprieve. The registrar woke them, and told them that, judged by man, they must now prepare to appear before God.

Beatrice was at first thunderstruck: she seemed paralysed and speechless; then she rose from bed, and staggering as if intoxicated, recovered her speech, uttering despairing cries. Lucrezia heard the tidings with more firmness, and proceeded to dress herself to go to the chapel, exhorting Beatrice to resignation; but she, raving, wrung her hands and struck her head against the wall, shrieking, "To die! to die! Am I to die unprepared, on a scaffold! on a gibbet! My God! my God!" This fit led to a terrible paroxysm, after which the exhaustion of her body enabled her mind to recover its balance, and from that moment she became an angel of humility and an example of resignation.

Her first request was for a notary to make her will. This was immediately complied with, and on his arrival she dictated its provisions with much calmness and precision. Its last clause desired her interment in the church of San Pietro in Montorio, for which she always had a strong attachment, as it commanded a view of her father's palace. She bequeathed five hundred crowns to the nuns of the order of the Stigmata, and ordered that her dowry, amounting to fifteen thousand crowns, should be distributed in marriage portions to fifty poor girls. She selected the foot of the high altar as the place where she wished to be buried, over which hung the beautiful picture of the Transfiguration, so often admired by her during her life.

Following her example, Lucrezia in her turn disposed of her property: she desired to be buried in the church of San Giorgio di Velobre, and left thirty-two thousand crowns to charities, with other pious legacies. Having settled their earthly affairs, they joined in prayer, reciting psalms, litanies, and prayers for the dying.

At eight o'clock they confessed, heard mass, and received the sacraments; after which Beatrice, observing to her stepmother that the rich dresses they wore were out of place on a

scaffold, ordered two to be made in nun's fashion—that is to say, gathered at the neck, with long wide sleeves. That for Lucrezia was made of black cotton stuff, Beatrice's of taffetas. In addition she had a small black turban made to place on her head. These dresses, with cords for girdles, were brought them; they were placed on a chair, while the women continued to pray.

The time appointed being near at hand, they were informed that their last moment was approaching. Then Beatrice, who was still on her knees, rose with a tranquil and almost joyful countenance. "Mother," said she, "the moment of our suffering is impending; I think we had better dress in these clothes, and help one another at our toilet for the last time." They then put on the dresses provided, girt themselves with the cords; Beatrice placed her turban on her head, and they awaited the last summons.

In the meantime, Giacomo and Bernardo, whose sentences had been read to them, awaited also the moment of their death. About ten o'clock the members of the Confraternity of Mercy, a Florentine order, arrived at the prison of Tordinona, and halted on the threshold with the crucifix, awaiting the appearance of the unhappy youths. Here a serious accident had nearly happened. As many persons were at the prison windows to see the prisoners come out, someone accidentally threw down a large flower-pot full of earth, which fell into the street and narrowly missed one of the Confraternity who was amongst the torch-bearers just before the crucifix. It passed so close to the torch as to extinguish the flame in its descent.

At this moment the gates opened, and Giacomo appeared first on the threshold. He fell on his knees, adoring the holy crucifix with great devotion. He was completely covered with a large mourning cloak, under which his bare breast was prepared to be torn by the red-hot pincers of the executioner, which were lying ready in a chafing-dish fixed to the cart. Having ascended the vehicle, in which the executioner placed him so as more readily to perform this office, Bernardo came

out, and was thus addressed on his appearance by the fiscal of Rome:—

"Signor Bernardo Cenci, in the name of our blessed Redeemer, our Holy Father the Pope spares your life; with the sole condition that you accompany your relatives to the scaffold and to their death, and never forget to pray for those with whom you were condemned to die."

At this unexpected intelligence, a loud murmur of joy spread among the crowd, and the members of the Confraternity immediately untied the small mask which covered the youth's eyes; for, owing to his tender age, it had been thought proper to conceal the scaffold from his sight.

Then the executioner, having disposed of Giacomo, came down from the cart to take Bernardo; whose pardon being formally communicated to him, he took off his handcuffs, and placed him alongside his brother, covering him up with a magnificent cloak embroidered with gold, for the neck and shoulders of the poor lad had been already bared, as a preliminary to his decapitation. People were surprised to see such a rich cloak in the possession of the executioner, but were told that it was the one given by Beatrice to Marzio to pledge him to the murder of her father, which fell to the executioner as a perquisite after the execution of the assassin. The sight of the great assemblage of people produced such an effect upon the boy that he fainted.

The procession then proceeded to the prison of Corte Savella, marching to the sound of funeral chants. At its gates the sacred crucifix halted for the women to join: they soon appeared, fell on their knees, and worshipped the holy symbol as the others had done. The march to the scaffold was then resumed.

The two female prisoners followed the last row of penitents in single file, veiled to the waist, with the distinction that Lucrezia, as a widow, wore a black veil and high-heeled slippers of the same hue, with bows of ribbon, as was the fashion; whilst Beatrice, as a young unmarried girl, wore a silk flat cap to match her corsage, with a plush hood, which fell over her

shoulders and covered her violet frock; white slippers with high heels, ornamented with gold rosettes and cherry-coloured fringe. The arms of both were untrammelled, except for a thin slack cord which left their hands free to carry a crucifix and a handkerchief.

During the night a lofty scaffold had been erected on the bridge of Sant' Angelo, and the plank and block were placed thereon. Above the block was hung, from a large cross beam, a ponderous axe, which, guided by two grooves, fell with its whole weight at the touch of a spring.

In this formation the procession wended its way towards the bridge of Sant' Angelo. Lucrezia, the more broken down of the two, wept bitterly; but Beatrice was firm and unmoved. On arriving at the open space before the bridge, the women were led into a chapel, where they were shortly joined by Giacomo and Bernardo; they remained together for a few moments, when the brothers were led away to the scaffold, although one was to be executed last, and the other was pardoned. But when they had mounted the platform, Bernardo fainted a second time; and as the executioner was approaching to his assistance, some of the crowd, supposing that his object was to decapitate him, cried loudly, "He is pardoned!" The executioner reassured them by seating Bernardo near the block, Giacomo kneeling on the other side.

Then the executioner descended, entered the chapel, and reappeared leading Lucrezia, who was the first to suffer. At the foot of the scaffold he tied her hands behind her back, tore open the top of her corsage so as to uncover her shoulders, gave her the crucifix to kiss, and led her to the step ladder. which she 'ascended with great difficulty, on account of her extreme stoutness; then, on her reaching the platform, he removed the veil which covered her head. On this exposure of her features to the immense crowd, Lucrezia shuddered from head to foot; then, her eyes full of tears, she cried with a loud voice—

"O my God, have mercy upon me; and do you, brethren, pray for my soul!"

Having uttered these words, not knowing what was required of her, she turned to Alessandro, the chief executioner, and asked what she was to do: he told her to bestride the plank and lie prone upon it; which she did with great trouble and timidity; but as she was unable, on account of the fullness of her bust, to lay her neck upon the block, this had to be raised by placing a billet of wood underneath it; all this time the poor woman, suffering even more from shame than from fear, was kept in suspense; at length, when she was properly adjusted, the executioner touched the spring, the knife fell, and the decapitated head, falling on the platform of the scaffold, bounded two or three times in the air, to the general horror; the executioner then seized it, showed it to the multitude, and wrapping it in black taffetas, placed it with the body on a bier at the foot of the scaffold.

Whilst arrangements were being made for the decapitation of Beatrice, several stands, full of spectators, broke down; some people were killed by this accident, and still more lamed and injured.

The machine being now rearranged and washed, the executioner returned to the chapel to take charge of Beatrice, who, on seeing the sacred crucifix, said some prayers for her soul, and on her hands being tied, cried out, "God grant that you be binding this body unto corruption, and loosing this soul unto life eternal!" She then arose, proceeded to the platform, where she devoutly kissed the stigmata; then, leaving her slippers at the foot of the scaffold, she nimbly ascended the ladder, and, instructed beforehand, promptly lay down on the plank, without exposing her naked shoulders. But her precautions to shorten the bitterness of death were of no avail, for the pope, knowing her impetuous disposition, and fearing lest she might be led into the commission of some sin between absolution and death, had given orders that the moment Beatrice was extended on the scaffold a signal gun should be fired from the castle of Sant' Angelo; which was done, to the great astonishment of everybody, including Beatrice herself, who, not expecting this explosion, raised herself almost upright;

the pope meanwhile, who was praying at Monte Cavallo, gave her absolution *in articulo mortis*. About five minutes thus passed, during which the sufferer waited with her head replaced on the block; at length, when the executioner judged that the absolution had been given, he released the spring, and the axe fell.

A gruesome sight was then afforded: whilst the head bounced away on one side of the block, on the other the body rose erect, as if about to step backwards; the executioner exhibited the head, and disposed of it and the body as before. He wished to place Beatrice's body with that of her stepmother, but the brotherhood of Mercy took it out of his hands, and as one of them was attempting to lay it on the bier, it slipped from him and fell from the scaffold to the ground below; the dress being partially torn from the body, which was so besmeared with dust and blood that much time was occupied in washing it. Poor Bernardo was so overcome by this horrible scene that he swooned away for the third time, and it was necessary to revive him with stimulants to witness the fate of his elder brother.

The turn of Giacomo at length arrived: he had witnessed the death of his stepmother and his sister, and his clothes were covered with their blood; the executioner approached him and tore off his cloak, exposing his bare breast covered with the wounds caused by the grip of red-hot pincers; in this state, and half naked, he rose to his feet, and turning to his brother, said—

"Bernardo, if in my examination I have compromised and accused you, I have done so falsely, and although I have already disavowed this declaration, I repeat, at the moment of appearing before God, that you are innocent, and that it is a cruel abuse of justice to compel you to witness this frightful spectacle."

The executioner then made him kneel down, bound his legs to one of the beams erected on the scaffold, and having bandaged his eyes, shattered his head with a blow of his mallet; then, in the sight of all, he hacked his body into four quarters. The official party then left, taking with them Bernardo, who, being in a state of high fever, was bled and put to bed.

The corpses of the two ladies were laid out each on its bier under the statue of St. Paul, at the foot of the bridge, with four torches of white wax, which burned till four o'clock in the afternoon; then, along with the remains of Giacomo, they were taken to the church of San Giovanni Decollato; finally, about nine in the evening, the body of Beatrice, covered with flowers, and attired in the dress worn at her execution, was carried to the church of San Pietro in Montorio, with fifty lighted torches, and followed by the brethren of the order of the Stigmata and all the Franciscan monks in Rome; there, agreeably to her wish, it was buried at the foot of the high altar.

The same evening Signora Lucrezia was interred, as she had desired to be, in the church of San Giorgio di Velobre.

All Rome may be said to have been present at this tragedy, carriages, horses, foot people, and cars crowding as it were upon one another. The day was unfortunately so hot, and the sun so scorching, that many persons fainted, others returned home stricken with fever, and some even died during the night, owing to sunstroke from exposure during the three hours occupied by the execution.

The Tuesday following, the 14th of September, being the Feast of the Holy Cross, the brotherhood of San Marcello, by special licence of the pope, set at liberty the unhappy Bernardo Cenci, with the condition of paying within the year two thousand five hundred Roman crowns to the brotherhood of the most Holy Trinity of Pope Sixtus, as may be found to-day recorded in their archives.

. . . . . .

Having now seen the tomb, if you desire to form a more vivid impression of the principal actors in this tragedy than can be derived from a narrative, pay a visit to the Barberini Gallery, where you will see, with five other masterpieces by Guido, the portrait of Beatrice, taken, some say the night before her execution, others during her progress to the scaffold; it is the head of a lovely girl, wearing a headdress composed of a turban with a lappet. The hair is of a rich fair chestnut hue; the dark eyes are moistened with recent tears; a perfectly formed nose sur-

mounts an infantile mouth; unfortunately, the loss of tone in the picture since it was painted has destroyed the original fair complexion. The age of the subject may be twenty, or perhaps twenty-two years.

Near this portrait is that of Lucrezia Petroni: the small head indicates a person below the middle height; the attributes are those of a Roman matron in her pride; her high complexion, graceful contour, straight nose, black eyebrows, and expression at the same time imperious and voluptuous indicate this character to the life; a smile still seems to linger on the charming dimpled cheeks and perfect mouth mentioned by the chronicler, and her face is exquisitely framed by luxuriant curls falling from her forehead in graceful profusion.

As for Giacomo and Bernardo, as no portraits of them are in existence, we are obliged to gather an idea of their appearance from the manuscript which has enabled us to compile this sanguinary history; they are thus described by the eye-witness of the closing scene:—

Giacomo was short, well-made and strong, with black hair and beard; he appeared to be about twenty-six years of age.

Poor Bernardo was the image of his sister, so nearly resembling her, that when he mounted the scaffold his long hair and girlish face led people to suppose him to be Beatrice herself: he might be fourteen or fifteen years of age.

The peace of God be with them!

JOAN OF NAPLES

JOAN OF NAPLES

1343–1382

CHAPTER I

IN the night of the 15th of January 1343, while the inhabitants of Naples lay wrapped in peaceful slumber, they were suddenly awakened by the bells of the three hundred churches that this thrice blessed capital contains. In the midst of the disturbance caused by so rude a call the first thought in the mind of all was that the town was on fire, or that the army of some enemy had mysteriously landed under cover of night and would put the citizens to the edge of the sword. But the doleful, intermittent sounds of all these bells, which disturbed the silence at regular and distant intervals, were an invitation to the faithful to pray for a passing soul, and it was soon evident that no disaster threatened the town, but that the king alone was in danger.

Indeed, it had been plain for several days past that the greatest uneasiness prevailed in Castel Nuovo; the officers of the crown were assembled regularly twice a day, and persons of importance, whose right it was to make their way into the king's apartments, came out evidently bowed down with grief. But although the king's death was regarded as a misfortune that nothing could avert, yet the whole town, on learning for certain of the approach of his last hour, was affected with a sincere grief, easily understood when one learns that the man about to die, after a reign of thirty-three years, eight months, and a few days, was Robert of Anjou, the most wise, just, and glorious king who had ever sat on the throne of Sicily.

And so he carried with him to the tomb the eulogies and regrets of all his subjects.

Soldiers would speak with enthusiasm of the long wars he had waged with Frederic and Peter of Aragon, against Henry VII and Louis of Bavaria, and felt their hearts beat high remembering the glories of campaigns in Lombardy and Tuscany; priests would gratefully extol his constant defence of the papacy against Ghibelline attacks, and the founding of convents, hospitals, and churches throughout his kingdom; in the world of letters he was regarded as the most learned king in Christendom; Petrarch, indeed, would receive the poet's crown from no other hand, and had spent three consecutive days answering all the questions that Robert had deigned to ask him on every topic of human knowledge. The men of law, astonished by the wisdom of those laws which now enriched the Neapolitan code, had dubbed him the Solomon of their day; the nobles applauded him for protecting their ancient privileges, and the people were eloquent of his clemency, piety, and mildness. In a word, priests and soldiers, philosophers and poets, nobles and peasants, trembled when they thought that the government was to fall into the hands of a foreigner and of a young girl, recalling those words of Robert, who, as he followed in the funeral train of Charles, his only son, turned as he reached the threshold of the church and sobbingly exclaimed to his barons about him, "This day the crown has fallen from my head: alas for me! alas for you!"

Now that the bells were ringing for the dying moments of the good king, every mind was full of these prophetic words: women prayed fervently to God; men from all parts of the town bent their steps towards the royal palace to get the earliest and most authentic news, and after waiting some moments, passed in exchanging sad reflections, were obliged to return as they had come, since nothing that went on in the privacy of the family found its way outside: the castle was plunged in complete darkness, the drawbridge was raised as usual, and the guards were at their post.

Yet if our readers care to be present at the death of the

nephew of Saint Louis and the grandson of Charles of Anjou, we may conduct them into the chamber of the dying man. An alabaster lamp suspended from the ceiling serves to light the vast and sombre room, with walls draped in black velvet sewn with golden fleur-de-lys. Near the wall which faces the two entrance doors that at this moment are both shut close, there stands beneath a brocaded canopy an ebony bed, supported on four twisted columns carved with symbolic figures. The king, after a struggle with a violent paroxysm, has fallen swooning in the arms of his confessor and his doctor, who each hold one of his dying hands, feeling his pulse anxiously and exchanging looks of intelligence. At the foot of the bed stands a woman about fifty years of age, her hands clasped, her eyes raised to heaven, in an attitude of resigned grief: this woman is the queen. No tears dim her eyes: her sunken cheek has that waxen yellow tinge that one sees on the bodies of saints preserved by miracle. In her look is that mingling of calm and suffering that points to a soul at once tried by sorrow and imbued with religion. After the lapse of an hour, while no movement had disturbed the profound silence which reigned about the bed of death, the king trembled slightly, opened his eyes, and endeavoured feebly to raise his head. Then thanking the physician and priest with a smile, who had both hastened to arrange his pillows, he begged the queen to come near, and told her in a low voice that he would speak with her a moment alone. The doctor and confessor retired, deeply bowing, and the king followed them with his eyes up to the moment when one of the doors closed behind them. He passed his hand across his brow, as though seeking to collect his thoughts, and rallying all his forces for the supreme effort, pronounced these words:—

"What I must say to you, Sancha, has no concern with those two good persons who were here a moment ago: their task is ended. One has done all for my body that human science could teach him, and all that has come of it is that my death is yet a little deferred; the other has now absolved me of all my sins, and assured me of God's forgiveness, yet cannot keep

from me those dread apparitions which in this terrible hour arise before me. Twice have you seen me battling with a superhuman horror. My brow has been bathed in sweat, my limbs rigid, my cries have been stifled by a hand of iron. Has God permitted the Evil Spirit to tempt me? Is this remorse in phantom shape? These two conflicts I have suffered have so subdued my strength that I can never endure a third. Listen then, my Sancha, for I have instructions to give you on which perhaps the safety of my soul depends."

"My lord and my master," said the queen in the most gentle accents of submission, "I am ready to listen to your orders; and should it be that God, in the hidden designs of His providence, has willed to call you to His glory while we are plunged in grief, your last wishes shall be fulfilled here on earth most scrupulously and exactly. But," she added, with all the solicitude of a timid soul, "pray suffer me to sprinkle drops of holy water and banish the accursed one from this chamber, and let me offer up some part of that service of prayer that you composed in honour of your sainted brother to implore God's protection in this hour when we can ill afford to lose it."

Then opening a richly bound book, she read with fervent devotion certain verses of the office that Robert had written in a very pure Latin for his brother Louis, Bishop of Toulouse, which was in use in the Church as late as the time of the Council of Trent.

Soothed by the charm of the prayers he had himself composed, the king was near forgetting the object of the interview he had so solemnly and eagerly demanded, and letting himself lapse into a state of vague melancholy, he murmured in a subdued voice, "Yes, yes, you are right; pray for me, for you too are a saint, and I am but a poor sinful man."

"Say not so, my lord," interrupted Doña Sancha; "you are the greatest, wisest, and most just king who has ever sat upon the throne of Naples."

"But the throne is usurped," replied Robert in a voice of gloom; "you know that the kingdom belonged to my elder

brother, Charles Martel; and since Charles was on the throne of Hungary, which he inherited from his mother, the kingdom of Naples devolved by right upon his eldest son, Carobert, and not on me, who am the third in rank of the family. And I have suffered myself to be crowned in my nephew's stead, though he was the only lawful king; I have put the younger branch in the place of the elder, and for thirty-three years I have stifled the reproaches of my conscience. True, I have won battles, made laws, founded churches; but a single word serves to give the lie to all the pompous titles showered upon me by the people's admiration, and this one word rings out clearer in my ears than all the flattery of courtiers, all the songs of poets, all the orations of the crowd:—I am an usurper!"

"Be not unjust towards yourself, my lord, and bear in mind that if you did not abdicate in favour of the rightful heir, it was because you wished to save the people from the worst misfortunes. Moreover," continued the queen, with that air of profound conviction that an unanswerable argument inspires, "you have remained king by the consent and authority of our Holy Father the sovereign pontiff, who disposes of the throne as a fief belonging to the Church."

"I have long quieted my scruples thus," replied the dying man, "and the pope's authority has kept me silent; but whatever security one may pretend to feel in one's lifetime, there yet comes a dreadful solemn hour when all illusions needs must vanish: this hour for me has come, and now I must appear before God, the one unfailing Judge."

"If His justice cannot fail, is not His mercy infinite?" pursued the queen, with the glow of sacred inspiration. "Even if there were good reason for the fear that has shaken your soul, what fault could not be effaced by a repentance so noble? Have you not repaired the wrong you may have done your nephew Carobert, by bringing his younger son André to your kingdom and marrying him to Joan, your poor Charles's elder daughter? Will not they inherit your crown?"

"Alas!" cried Robert, with a deep sigh, "God is punishing

me perhaps for thinking too late of this just reparation. O my good and noble Sancha, you touch a chord which vibrates sadly in my heart, and you anticipate the unhappy confidence I was about to make. I feel a gloomy presentiment—and in the hour of death presentiment is prophecy—that the two sons of my nephew, Louis, who has been King of Hungary since his father died, and André, whom I desired to make King of Naples, will prove the scourge of my family. Ever since André set foot in our castle, a strange fatality has pursued and overturned my projects. I had hoped that if André and Joan were brought up together a tender intimacy would arise between the two children, and that the beauty of our skies, our civilisation, and the attractions of our court would end by softening whatever rudeness there might be in the young Hungarian's character; but in spite of my efforts all has tended to cause coldness, and even aversion, between the bridal pair. Joan, scarcely fifteen, is far ahead of her age. Gifted with a brilliant and mobile mind, a noble and lofty character, a lively and glowing fancy, now free and frolicsome as a child, now grave and proud as a queen, trustful and simple as a young girl, passionate and sensitive as a woman, she presents the most striking contrast to André, who, after a stay of ten years at our court, is wilder, more gloomy, more intractable than ever. His cold, regular features, impassive countenance, and indifference to every pleasure that his wife appears to love, all this has raised between him and Joan a barrier of indifference, even of antipathy. To the tenderest effusion his reply is no more than a scornful smile or a frown, and he never seems happier than when on a pretext of the chase he can escape from the court. These, then, are the two, man and wife, on whose heads my crown shall rest, who in a short space will find themselves exposed to every passion whose dull growl is now heard below a deceptive calm, but which only awaits the moment when I breathe my last, to burst forth upon them."

"O my God, my God!" the queen kept repeating in her grief: her arms fell by her side, like the arms of a statue weeping by a tomb.

"Listen, Doña Sancha. I know that your heart has never clung to earthly vanities, and that you only wait till God has called me to Himself to withdraw to the convent of Santa Maria della Croce, founded by yourself in the hope that you might there end your days. Far be it from me to dissuade you from your sacred vocation, when I am myself descending into the tomb and am conscious of the nothingness of all human greatness. Only grant me one year of widowhood before you pass on to your bridal with the Lord, one year in which you will watch over Joan and her husband, to keep from them all the dangers that threaten. Already the woman who was the seneschal's wife and her son have too much influence over our granddaughter; be specially careful, and amid the many interests, intrigues, and temptations that will surround the young queen, distrust particularly the affection of Bertrand d'Artois, the beauty of Louis of Tarentum, and the ambition of Charles of Durazzo."

The king paused, exhausted by the effort of speaking; then turning on his wife a supplicating glance and extending his thin wasted hand, he added in a scarcely audible voice—

"Once again I entreat you, leave not the court before a year has passed. Do you promise me?"

"I promise, my lord."

"And now," said Robert, whose face at these words took on a new animation, "call my confessor and the physician and summon the family, for the hour is at hand, and soon I shall not have the strength to speak my last words."

A few moments later the priest and the doctor re-entered the room, their faces bathed in tears. The king thanked them warmly for their care of him in his last illness, and begged them help to dress him in the coarse garb of a Franciscan monk, that God, as he said, seeing him die in poverty, humility, and penitence, might the more easily grant him pardon. The confessor and doctor placed upon his naked feet the sandals worn by mendicant friars, robed him in a Franciscan frock, and tied the rope about his waist. Stretched thus upon his bed, his brow surmounted by his

scanty locks, with his long white beard, and his hands crossed upon his breast, the King of Naples looked like one of those aged anchorites who spend their lives in mortifying the flesh, and whose souls, absorbed in heavenly contemplation, glide insensibly from out their last ecstasy into eternal bliss. Some time he lay thus with closed eyes, putting up a silent prayer to God; then he bade them light the spacious room as for a great solemnity, and gave a sign to the two persons who stood, one at the head, the other at the foot of the bed. The two folding doors opened, and the whole of the royal family, with the queen at their head and the chief barons following, took their places in silence around the dying king to hear his last wishes.

His eyes turned towards Joan, who stood next him on his right hand, with an indescribable look of tenderness and grief. She was of a beauty so unusual and so marvellous, that her grandfather was fascinated by the dazzling sight, and mistook her for an angel that God had sent to console him on his deathbed. The pure lines of her fine profile, her great black liquid eyes, her noble brow uncovered, her hair shining like the raven's wing, her delicate mouth, the whole effect of this beautiful face on the mind of those who beheld her was that of a deep melancholy and sweetness, impressing itself once and for ever. Tall and slender, but without the excessive thinness of some young girls, her movements had that careless supple grace that recall the waving of a flower stalk in the breeze. But in spite of all these smiling and innocent graces one could yet discern in Robert's heiress a will firm and resolute to brave every obstacle, and the dark rings that circled her fine eyes plainly showed that her heart was already agitated by passions beyond her years.

Beside Joan stood her younger sister, Marie, who was twelve or thirteen years of age, the second daughter of Charles, Duke of Calabria, who had died before her birth, and whose mother, Marie of Valois, had unhappily been lost to her from her cradle. Exceedingly pretty and shy, she seemed distressed by such an assembly of great personages, and quietly drew near to the widow of the grand seneschal, Philippa, surnamed the Catanese, the

princesses' governess, whom they honoured as a mother. Behind the princesses and beside this lady stood her son, Robert of Cabane, a handsome young man, proud and upright, who with his left hand played with his slight moustache while he secretly cast on Joan a glance of audacious boldness. The group was completed by Doña Cancha, the young chamberwoman to the princesses, and by the Count of Terlizzi, who exchanged with her many a furtive look and many an open smile. The second group was composed of André, Joan's husband, and Friar Robert, tutor to the young prince, who had come with him from Budapesth, and never left him for a minute. André was at this time perhaps eighteen years old: at first sight one was struck by the extreme regularity of his features, his handsome, noble face, and abundant fair hair; but among all these Italian faces, with their vivid animation, his countenance lacked expression, his eyes seemed dull, and something hard and icy in his looks revealed his wild character and foreign extraction. His tutor's portrait Petrarch has drawn for us: crimson face, hair and beard red, figure short and crooked; proud in poverty, rich and miserly; like a second Diogenes, with hideous and deformed limbs barely concealed beneath his friar's frock.

In the third group stood the widow of Philip, Prince of Tarentum, the king's brother, honoured at the court of Naples with the title of Empress of Constantinople, a style inherited by her as the granddaughter of Baldwin II. Anyone accustomed to sound the depths of the human heart would at one glance have perceived that this woman under her ghastly pallor concealed an implacable hatred, a venomous jealousy, and an all-devouring ambition. She had her three sons about her—Robert, Philip, and Louis, the youngest. Had the king chosen out from among his nephews the handsomest, bravest, and most generous, there can be no doubt that Louis of Tarentum would have obtained the crown. At the age of twenty-three he had already excelled the cavaliers of most renown in feats of arms; honest, loyal, and brave, he no sooner conceived a project than he promptly carried it out. His brow shone in that clear light which seems to serve as a halo of success to natures so privileged as his; his fine eyes, of a soft

and velvety black, subdued the hearts of men who could not resist their charm, and his caressing smile made conquest sweet. A child of destiny, he had but to use his will; some power unknown, some beneficent fairy had watched over his birth, and undertaken to smooth away all obstacles, gratify all desires.

Near to him, but in the fourth group, his cousin Charles of Duras stood and scowled. His mother, Agnes, the widow of the Duke of Durazzo and Albania, another of the king's brothers, looked upon him affrighted, clutching to her breast her two younger sons, Ludovico, Count of Gravina, and Robert, Prince of Morea. Charles, pale-faced, with short hair and thick beard, was glancing with suspicion first at his dying uncle and then at Joan and the little Marie, then again at his cousins, apparently os excited by tumultuous thoughts that he could not stand still. His feverish uneasiness presented a marked contrast with the calm, dreamy face of Bertrand d'Artois, who, giving precedence to his father Charles, approached the queen at the foot of the bed, and so found himself face to face with Joan. The young man was so absorbed by the beauty of the princess that he seemed to see nothing else in the room.

As soon as Joan and André, the Princes of Tarentum and Durazzo, the Counts of Artois, and Queen Sancha had taken their places round the bed of death, forming a semicircle, as we have just described, the vice-chancellor passed through the rows of barons, who according to their rank were following closely after the princes of the blood, and bowing low before the king, unfolded a parchment sealed with the royal seal, and read in a solemn voice, amid a profound silence:—

"Robert, by the grace of God King of Sicily and Jerusalem, Count of Provence, Forcalquier, and Piedmont, Vicar of the Holy Roman Church, hereby nominates and declares his sole heiress in the kingdom of Sicily on this side and the other side of the strait, as also in the counties of Provence, Forcalquier, and Piedmont, and in all his other territories, Joan, Duchess of Calabria, elder daughter of the excellent lord Charles, Duke of Calabria, of illustrious memory.

"Moreover, he nominates and declares the honourable lady

Marie, younger daughter of the late Duke of Calabria, his heiress in the county of Alba and in the jurisdiction of the valley of Grati and the territory of Giordano, with all their castles and dependencies; and orders that the lady thus named receive them in fief direct from the aforesaid duchess and her heirs; on this condition, however, that if the duchess give and grant to her illustrious sister or to her assigns the sum of 10,000 ounces of gold by way of compensation, the county and jurisdiction aforesaid shall remain in the possession of the duchess and her heirs.

"Moreover, he wills and commands, for private and secret reasons, that the aforesaid lady Marie shall contract a marriage with the very illustrious prince, Louis, reigning King of Hungary. And in case any impediment should appear to this marriage by reason of the union said to be already arranged and signed between the King of Hungary and the King of Bohemia and his daughter, our lord the king commands that the illustrious lady Marie shall contract a marriage with the elder son of the mighty lord Don Juan, Duke of Normandy, himself the elder son of the reigning King of France."

At this point Charles of Durazzo gave Marie a singularly meaning look, which escaped the notice of all present, their attention being absorbed by the reading of Robert's will. The young girl herself, from the moment when she first heard her own name, had stood confused and thunderstruck, with scarlet cheeks, not daring to raise her eyes.

The vice-chancellor continued:—

"Moreover, he has willed and commanded that the counties of Forcalquier and Provence shall in all perpetuity be united to his kingdom, and shall form one sole and inseparable dominion, whether or not there be several sons or daughters or any other reason of any kind for its partition, seeing that this union is of the utmost importance for the security and common prosperity of the kingdom and counties aforesaid.

"Moreover, he has decided and commanded that in case of the death of the Duchess Joan—which God avert!—without lawful issue of her body, the most illustrious lord André, Duke of

Calabria, her husband, shall have the principality of Salerno, with the title, fruits, revenues, and all the rights thereof, together with the revenue of 2000 ounces of gold for maintenance.

"Moreover, he has decided and ordered that the Queen above all, and also the venerable father Don Philip of Cabassole, Bishop of Cavaillon, vice-chancellor of the kingdom of Sicily, and the magnificent lords Philip of Sanguineto, seneschal of Provence, Godfrey of Marsan, Count of Squillace, admiral of the kingdom, and Charles of Artois, Count of Aire, shall be governors, regents, and administrators of the aforesaid lord André and the aforesaid ladies Joan and Marie, until such time as the duke, the duchess, and the very illustrious lady Marie shall have attained their twenty-fifth year," etc. etc.

When the vice-chancellor had finished reading, the king sat up, and glancing round upon his fair and numerous family, thus spoke:—

"My children, you have heard my last wishes. I have bidden you all to my deathbed, that you may see how the glory of the world passes away. Those whom men name the great ones of the earth have more duties to perform, and after death more accounts to render: it is in this that their greatness lies. I have reigned thirty-three years, and God before whom I am about to appear, God to whom my sighs have often arisen during my long and painful life, God alone knows the thoughts that rend my heart in the hour of death. Soon shall I be lying in the tomb, and all that remains of me in this world will live in the memory of those who pray for me. But before I leave you for ever, you, oh, you who are twice my daughters, whom I have loved with a double love, and you my nephews who have had from me all the care and affection of a father, promise me to be ever united in heart and in wish, as indeed you are in my love. I have lived longer than your fathers, I the eldest of all, and thus no doubt God has wished to tighten the bonds of your affection, to accustom you to live in one family and to pay honour to one head. I have loved you all alike, as a father should, without exception or preference. I have disposed of my throne according to the law of nature and

the inspiration of my conscience. Here are the heirs of the crown of Naples; you, Joan, and you, André, will never forget the love and respect that are due between husband and wife, and mutually sworn by you at the foot of the altar; and you, my nephews all, my barons, my officers, render homage to your lawful sovereigns; André of Hungary, Louis of Tarentum, Charles of Durazzo, remember that you are brothers; woe to him who shall imitate the perfidy of Cain! May his blood fall upon his own head, and may he be accursed by Heaven as he is by the mouth of a dying man; and may the blessing of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit descend upon that man whose heart is good, when the Lord of mercy shall call to my soul Himself!"

The king remained motionless, his arms raised, his eyes fixed on heaven, his cheeks extraordinarily bright, while the princes, barons, and officers of the court proffered to Joan and her husband the oath of fidelity and allegiance. When it was the turn of the Princes of Duras to advance, Charles disdainfully stalked past André, and bending his knee before the princess, said in a loud voice, as he kissed her hand—

"To you, my queen, I pay my homage."

All looks were turned fearfully towards the dying man, but the good king no longer heard. Seeing him fall back rigid and motionless, Doña Sancha burst into sobs, and cried in a voice choked with tears—

"The king is dead; let us pray for his soul."

At the very same moment all the princes hurried from the room, and every passion hitherto suppressed in the presence of the king now found its vent like a mighty torrent breaking through its banks.

"Long live Joan!" Robert of Cabane, Louis of Tarentum, and Bertrand of Artois were the first to exclaim, while the prince's tutor, furiously breaking through the crowd and apostrophising the various members of the council of regency, cried aloud in varying tones of passion, "Gentlemen, you have forgotten the king's wish already; you must cry, 'Long live André!' too"; then, wedding example to precept, and himself

making more noise than all the barons together, he cried in a voice of thunder—

"Long live the King of Naples!"

But there was no echo to his cry, and Charles of Durazzo, measuring the Dominican with a terrible look, approached the queen, and taking her by the hand, slid back the curtains of the balcony, from which was seen the square and the town of Naples. So far as the eye could reach there stretched an immense crowd, illuminated by streams of light, and thousands of heads were turned upward towards Castel Nuovo to gather any news that might be announced. Charles respectfully drawing back and indicating his fair cousin with his hand, cried out—

"People of Naples, the King is dead: long live the Queen!"

"Long live Joan, Queen of Naples!" replied the people, with a single mighty cry that resounded through every quarter of the town.

The events that on this night had followed each other with the rapidity of a dream had produced so deep an impression on Joan's mind, that, agitated by a thousand different feelings, she retired to her own rooms, and shutting herself up in her chamber, gave free vent to her grief. So long as the conflict of so many ambitions waged about the tomb, the young queen, refusing every consolation that was offered her, wept bitterly for the death of her grandfather, who had loved her to the point of weakness. The king was buried with all solemnity in the church of Santa Chiara, which he had himself founded and dedicated to the Holy Sacrament, enriching it with magnificent frescoes by Giotto and other precious relics, among which is shown still, behind the tribune of the high altar, two columns of white marble taken from Solomon's temple. There still lies Robert, represented on his tomb in the dress of a king and in a monk's frock, on the right of the monument to his son Charles, the Duke of Calabria.

CHAPTER II

AS soon as the obsequies were over, André's tutor hastily assembled the chief Hungarian lords, and it was decided in a council held in the presence of the prince and with his consent, to send letters to his mother, Elizabeth of Poland, and his brother, Louis of Hungary, to make known to them the purport of Robert's will, and at the same time to lodge a complaint at the court of Avignon against the conduct of the princes and people of Naples in that they had proclaimed Joan alone Queen of Naples, thus overlooking the rights of her husband, and further to demand for him the pope's order for André's coronation. Friar Robert, who had not only a profound knowledge of the court intrigues, but also the experience of a philosopher and all a monk's cunning, told his pupil that he ought to profit by the depression of spirit the king's death had produced in Joan, and ought not to suffer her favourites to use this time in influencing her by their seductive counsels.

But Joan's ability to receive consolation was quite as ready as her grief had at first been impetuous: the sobs which seemed to be breaking her heart ceased all at once; new thoughts, more gentle, less lugubrious, took possession of the young queen's mind; the trace of tears vanished, and a smile lit up her liquid eyes like the sun's ray following on rain. This change, anxiously awaited, was soon observed by Joan's chamberwoman: she stole to the queen's room, and falling on her knees, in accents of flattery and affection, she offered her first congratulations to her lovely mistress. Joan opened her arms and held her in a long embrace; for Doña Cancha was far more to her than a lady-in-waiting; she was the companion of infancy, the depositary of all her secrets, the con-

fidante of her most private thoughts. One had but to glance at this young girl to understand the fascination she could scarcely fail to exercise over the queen's mind. She had a frank and smiling countenance, such as inspires confidence and captivates the mind at first sight. Her face had an irresistible charm, with clear blue eyes, warm golden hair, mouth bewitchingly turned up at the corners, and delicate little chin. Wild, happy, light of heart, pleasure and love were the breath of her being; her dainty refinement, her charming inconstancies, all made her at sixteen as lovely as an angel, though at heart she was corrupt. The whole court was at her feet, and Joan felt more affection for her than for her own sister.

"Well, my dear Cancha," she murmured, with a sigh, "you find me very sad and very unhappy!"

"And you find me, fair queen," replied the confidante, fixing an admiring look on Joan,—"you find me just the opposite, very happy that I can lay at your feet before anyone else the proof of the joy that the people of Naples are at this moment feeling. Others perhaps may envy you the crown that shines upon your brow, the throne which is one of the noblest in the world, the shouts of this entire town that sound rather like worship than homage; but I, madam, I envy you your lovely black hair, your dazzling eyes, your more than mortal grace, which make every man adore you."

"And yet you know, my Cancha, I am much to be pitied both as a queen and as a woman: when one is fifteen a crown is heavy to wear, and I have not the liberty of the meanest of my subjects—I mean in my affections; for before I reached an age when I could think I was sacrificed to a man whom I can never love."

"Yet, madam," replied Cancha in a more insinuating voice, "in this court there is a young cavalier who might by virtue of respect, love, and devotion have made you forget the claims of this foreigner, alike unworthy to be our king and to be your husband."

The queen heaved a heavy sigh.

"When did you lose your skill to read my heart?" she

cried. "Must I actually tell you that this love is making me wretched? True, at the very first this unsanctioned love was a keen joy: a new life seemed to wake within my heart; I was drawn on, fascinated by the prayers, the tears, and the despair of this man, by the opportunities that his mother so easily granted, she whom I had always looked upon as my own mother; I have loved him . . . O my God, I am still so young, and my past is so unhappy. At times strange thoughts come into my mind: I fancy he no longer loves me, that he never did love me; I fancy he has been led on by ambition, by self-interest, by some ignoble motive, and has only feigned a feeling that he has never really felt. I feel myself a coldness I cannot account for; in his presence I am constrained, I am troubled by his look, his voice makes me tremble: I fear him; I would sacrifice a year of my life could I never have listened to him."

These words seemed to touch the young confidante to the very depths of her soul; a shade of sadness crossed her brow, her eyelids dropped, and for some time she answered nothing, showing sorrow rather than surprise. Then, lifting her head gently, she said, with visible embarrassment—

"I should never have dared to pass so severe a judgment upon a man whom my sovereign lady has raised above other men by casting upon him a look of kindness; but if Robert of Cabane has deserved the reproach of inconstancy and ingratitude, if he has perjured himself like a coward, he must indeed be the basest of all miserable beings, despising a happiness which other men might have entreated of God the whole time of their life and paid for through eternity. One man I know, who weeps both night and day without hope or consolation, consumed by a slow and painful malady, when one word might yet avail to save him, did it come from the lips of my noble mistress."

"I will not hear another word," cried Joan, suddenly rising; "there shall be no new cause for remorse in my life. Trouble has come upon me through my loves, both lawful and criminal; alas! no longer will I try to control my awful fate, I will bow

my head without a murmur. I am the queen, and I must yield myself up for the good of my subjects."

"Will you forbid me, madam," replied Doña Cancha in a kind, affectionate tone,—"will you forbid me to name Bertrand of Artois in your presence, that unhappy man, with the beauty of an angel and the modesty of a girl? Now that you are queen and have the life and death of your subjects in your own keeping, will you feel no kindness towards an unfortunate one whose only fault is to adore you, who strives with all his mind and strength to bear a chance look of yours without dying of his joy?"

"I have struggled hard never to look on him," cried the queen, urged by an impulse she was not strong enough to conquer: then, to efface the impression that might well have been made on her friend's mind, she added severely, "I forbid you to pronounce his name before me; and if he should ever venture to complain, I bid you tell him from me that the first time I even suspect the cause of his distress he will be banished for ever from my presence."

"Ah, madam, dismiss me also; for I shall never be strong enough to do so hard a bidding: the unhappy man who cannot awake in your heart so much as a feeling of pity may now be struck down by yourself in your wrath, for here he stands; he has heard your sentence, and comes to die at your feet."

The last words were spoken in a louder voice, so that they might be heard from outside, and Bertrand of Artois came hurriedly into the room and fell on his knees before the queen. For a long time past the young lady-in-waiting had perceived that Robert of Cabane had, through his own fault, lost the love of Joan; for his tyranny had indeed become more unendurable to her than her husband's. Doña Cancha had been quick enough to perceive that the eyes of her young mistress were wont to rest with a kind of melancholy gentleness on Bertrand, a young man of handsome appearance but with a sad and dreamy expression; so when she made up her mind to speak in his interests, she was persuaded that the queen already loved him. Still, a bright colour overspread Joan's

face, and her anger would have fallen on both culprits alike, when in the next room a sound of steps was heard, and the voice of the grand seneschal's widow in conversation with her son fell on the ears of the three young people like a clap of thunder. Doña Cancha, pale as death, stood trembling; Bertrand felt that he was lost all the more because his presence compromised the queen; Joan only, with that wonderful presence of mind she was destined to preserve in the most difficult crises of her future life, thrust the young man against the carved back of her bed, and concealed him completely beneath the ample curtain: she then signed to Cancha to go forward and meet the governess and her son.

But before we conduct into the queen's room these two persons, whom our readers may remember in Joan's train about the bed of King Robert, we must relate the circumstances which had caused the family of the Catanese to rise with incredible rapidity from the lowest class of the people to the highest rank at court. When Doña Violante of Aragon, first wife of Robert of Anjou, became the mother of Charles, who was later on the Duke of Calabria, a nurse was sought for the infant among the most handsome women of the people. After inspecting many women of equal merit as regards beauty, youth, and health, the princess's choice lighted on Philippa, a young Catanese woman, the wife of a fisherman of Trapani, and by condition a laundress. This young woman, as she washed her linen on the bank of a stream, had dreamed strange dreams: she had fancied herself summoned to court, wedded to a great personage, and receiving the honours of a great lady. Thus when she was called to Castel Nuovo her joy was great, for she felt that her dreams now began to be realised. Philippa was installed at the court, and a few months after she began to nurse the child the fisherman was dead and she was a widow. Meanwhile Raymond of Cabane, the major-domo of King Charles II's house, had bought a negro from some corsairs, and having had him baptized by his own name, had given him his liberty; afterwards observing that he was able and intelligent, he had appointed him head cook in the king's kitchen; and

then he had gone away to the war. During the absence of his patron the negro managed his own affairs at the court so cleverly, that in a short time he was able to buy land, houses, farms, silver plate, and horses, and could vie in riches with the best in the kingdom; and as he constantly won higher favour in the royal family, he passed on from the kitchen to the wardrobe. The Catanese had also deserved very well of her employers, and as a reward for the care she had bestowed on the child, the princess married her to the negro, and he, as a wedding gift, was granted the title of knight. From this day forward, Raymond of Cabane and Philippa the laundress rose in the world so rapidly that they had no equal in influence at court. After the death of Doña Violante, the Catanese became the intimate friend of Doña Sancha, Robert's second wife, whom we introduced to our readers at the beginning of this narrative. Charles, her foster-son, loved her as a mother, and she was the confidante of his two wives in turn, especially of the second wife, Marie of Valois. And as the quondam laundress had in the end learned all the manners and customs of the court, she was chosen at the birth of Joan and her sister to be governess and mistress over the young girls, and at this juncture Raymond was created major-domo. Finally, Marie of Valois on her death-bed commended the two young princesses to her care, begging her to look on them as her own daughters. Thus Philippa the Catanese, honoured in future as foster mother of the heiress to the throne of Naples, had power to nominate her husband grand seneschal, one of the seven most important offices in the kingdom, and to obtain knighthood for her sons. Raymond of Cabane was buried like a king in a marble tomb in the church of the Holy Sacrament, and there he was speedily joined by two of his sons. The third, Robert, a youth of extraordinary strength and beauty, gave up an ecclesiastical career, and was himself made major-domo, his two sisters being married to the Count of Merlizzi and the Count of Morcone respectively. This was now the state of affairs, and the influence of the grand seneschal's widow seemed for ever established, when an unexpected event suddenly occurred, causing such injury

as might well suffice to upset the edifice of her fortunes that had been raised stone by stone so patiently and slowly: this edifice was now undermined and threatened to fall in a single day. It was the sudden apparition of Friar Robert, who followed to the court of Rome his young pupil, who from infancy had been Joan's destined husband, which thus shattered all the designs of the Catanese and seriously menaced her future. The monk had not been slow to understand that so long as she remained at the court, André would be no more than the slave, possibly even the victim, of his wife. Thus all Friar Robert's thoughts were obstinately concentrated on a single end, that of getting rid of the Catanese or neutralising her influence. The prince's tutor and the governess of the heiress had but to exchange one glance, icy, penetrating, plain to read: their looks met like lightning flashes of hatred and of vengeance. The Catanese, who felt she was detected, lacked courage to fight this man in the open, and so conceived the hope of strengthening her tottering empire by the arts of corruption and debauchery. She instilled by degrees into her pupil's mind the poison of vice, inflamed her youthful imagination with precocious desires, sowed in her heart the seeds of an unconquerable aversion for her husband, surrounded the poor child with abandoned women, and especially attached to her the beautiful and attractive Doña Cancha, who is branded by contemporary authors with the name of a courtesan; then summed up all these lessons in infamy by prostituting Joan to her own son. The poor girl, polluted by sin before she knew what life was, threw her whole self into this first passion with all the ardour of youth, and loved Robert of Cabane so violently, so madly, that the Catanese congratulated herself on the success of her infamy, believing that she held her prey so fast in her toils that her victim would never attempt to escape them.

A year passed by before Joan, conquered by her infatuation, conceived the smallest suspicion of her lover's sincerity. He, more ambitious than affectionate, found it easy to conceal his coldness under the cloak of a brotherly intimacy, of blind submission, and of unswerving devotion; perhaps he would

have deceived his mistress for a longer time had not Bertrand of Artois fallen madly in love with Joan. Suddenly the bandage fell from the young girl's eyes; comparing the two with the natural instinct of a woman beloved which never goes astray, she perceived that Robert of Cabane loved her for his own sake, while Bertrand of Artois would give his life to make her happy. A light fell upon her past: she mentally recalled the circumstances that preceded and accompanied her earliest love; and a shudder went through her at the thought that she had been sacrificed to a cowardly seducer by the very woman she had loved most in the world, whom she had called by the name of mother.

Joan drew back into herself, and wept bitterly. Wounded by a single blow in all her affections, at first her grief absorbed her; then, roused to sudden anger, she proudly raised her head, for now her love was changed to scorn. Robert, amazed at her cold and haughty reception of him, following on so great a love, was stung by jealousy and wounded pride. He broke out into bitter reproach and violent recrimination, and, letting fall the mask, once for all lost his place in Joan's heart.

His mother at last saw that it was time to interfere: she rebuked her son, accusing him of upsetting all her plans by his clumsiness.

"As you have failed to conquer her by love," she said, "you must now subdue her by fear. The secret of her honour is in our hands, and she will never dare to rebel. She plainly loves Bertrand of Artois, whose languishing eyes and humble sighs contrast in a striking manner with your haughty indifference and your masterful ways. The mother of the Princes of Tarentum, the Empress of Constantinople, will easily seize an occasion of helping on the princess's love so as to alienate her more and more from her husband: Cancha will be the go-between, and sooner or later we shall find Bertrand at Joan's feet. Then she will be able to refuse us nothing."

While all this was going on, the old king died, and the Catanese, who had unceasingly kept on the watch for the moment she had so plainly foreseen, loudly called to her son,

when she saw Bertrand slip into Joan's apartment, saying as she drew him after her—

"Follow me, the queen is ours."

It was thus that she and her son came to be there. Joan, standing in the middle of her chamber, pallid, her eyes fixed on the curtains of the bed, concealed her agitation with a smile, and took one step forward towards her governess, stooping to receive the kiss which the latter bestowed upon her every morning. The Catanese embraced her with affected cordiality, and turning to her son, who had knelt upon one knee, said, pointing to Robert—

"My fair queen, allow the humblest of your subjects to offer his sincere congratulations and to lay his homage at your feet."

"Rise, Robert," said Joan, extending her hand kindly, and with no show of bitterness. "We were brought up together, and I shall never forget that in our childhood—I mean those happy days when we were both innocent—I called you my brother."

"As you allow me, madam," said Robert, with an ironical smile, "I too shall always remember the names you formerly gave me."

"And I," said the Catanese, "shall forget that I speak to the Queen of Naples, in embracing once more my beloved daughter. Come, madam, away with care: you have wept long enough; we have long respected your grief. It is now time to show yourself to these good Neapolitans who bless Heaven continually for granting them a queen so beautiful and good; it is time that your favours rain upon the heads of your faithful subjects; and my son, who surpasses all in his fidelity, comes first to ask a favour of you, in order that he may serve you yet more zealously."

Joan cast on Robert a withering look, and, speaking to the Catanese, said with a scornful air—

"You know, madam, I can refuse your son nothing."

"All he asks," continued the lady, "is a title which is his due, and which he inherited from his father—the title of Grand

Seneschal of the Two Sicilies: I trust, my daughter, you will have no difficulty in granting this."

"But I must consult the council of regency."

"The council will hasten to ratify the queen's wishes," replied Robert, handing her the parchment with an imperious gesture: "you need only speak to the Count of Artois."

And he cast a threatening glance at the curtain, which had slightly moved.

"You are right," said the queen at once; and going up to a table she signed the parchment with a trembling hand.

"Now, my daughter, I have come in the name of all the care I bestowed on your infancy, of all the maternal love I have lavished on you, to implore a favour that my family will remember for evermore."

The queen recoiled one step, crimson with astonishment and rage; but before she could find words to reply, the lady continued in a voice that betrayed no feeling—

"I request you to make my son Count of Eboli."

"That has nothing to do with me, madam; the barons of this kingdom would revolt to a man if I were on my own authority to exalt to one of the first dignities the son of a——"

"A laundress and a negro, you would say, madam?" said Robert, with a sneer. "Bertrand of Artois would be annoyed perhaps if I had a title like his."

He advanced a step towards the bed, his hand upon the hilt of his sword.

"Have mercy, Robert!" cried the queen, checking him: "I will do all you ask."

And she signed the parchment naming him Count of Eboli.

"And now," Robert went on impudently, "to show that my new title is not illusory, while you are busy about signing documents, let me have the privilege of taking part in the councils of the crown: make a declaration that, subject to your good pleasure, my mother and I are to have a deliberative voice in the council whenever an important matter is under discussion."

"Never!" cried Joan, turning pale. "Philippa and Robert, you abuse my weakness and treat your queen shamefully. In the last few days I have wept and suffered continually, overcome by a terrible grief; I have no strength to turn to business now. Leave me, I beg: I feel my strength gives way."

"What, my daughter," cried the Catanese hypocritically, "are you feeling unwell? Come and lie down at once." And hurrying to the bed, she took hold of the curtain that concealed the Count of Artois.

The queen uttered a piercing cry, and threw herself before Philippa with the fury of a lioness. "Stop!" she cried in a choking voice; "take the privilege you ask, and now, if you value your own life, leave me."

The Catanese and her son departed instantly, not even waiting to reply, for they had got all they wanted; while Joan, trembling, ran desperately up to Bertrand, who had angrily drawn his dagger, and would have fallen upon the two favourites to take vengeance for the insults they had offered to the queen; but he was very soon disarmed by the lovely shining eyes raised to him in supplication, the two arms cast about him, and the tears shed by Joan: he fell at her feet and kissed them rapturously, with no thought of seeking excuse for his presence, with no word of love, for it was as if they had loved always: he lavished the tenderest caresses on her, dried her tears, and pressed his trembling lips upon her lovely head. Joan began to forget her anger, her vows, and her repentance: soothed by the music of her lover's speech, she returned uncomprehending monosyllables: her heart beat till it felt like breaking, and once more she was falling beneath love's resistless spell, when a new interruption occurred, shaking her roughly out of her ecstasy; but this time the young count was able to pass quietly and calmly into a room adjoining, and Joan prepared to receive her importunate visitor with severe and frigid dignity.

The individual who arrived at so inopportune a moment was little calculated to smooth Joan's ruffled brow, being Charles, the eldest son of the Durazzo family. After he had introduced

his fair cousin to the people as their only legitimate sovereign, he had sought on various occasions to obtain an interview with her, which in all probability would be decisive. Charles was one of those men who to gain their end recoil at nothing; devoured by raging ambition and accustomed from his earliest years to conceal his most ardent desires beneath a mask of careless indifference, he marched ever onward, plot succeeding plot, towards the object he was bent upon securing, and never deviated one hair's-breadth from the path he had marked out, but only acted with double prudence after each victory, and with double courage after each defeat. His cheek grew pale with joy; when he hated most, he smiled; in all the emotions of his life, however strong, he was inscrutable. He had sworn to sit on the throne of Naples, and long had believed himself the rightful heir, as being nearest of kin to Robert of all his nephews. To him the hand of Joan would have been given, had not the old king in his latter days conceived the plan of bringing André from Hungary and re-establishing the elder branch in his person, though that had long since been forgotten. But his resolution had never for a moment been weakened by the arrival of André in the kingdom, or by the profound indifference wherewith Joan, preoccupied with other passion, had always received the advances of her cousin Charles of Durazzo. Neither the love of a woman nor the life of a man was of any account to him when a crown was weighed in the other scale of the balance.

During the whole time that the queen had remained invisible, Charles had hung about her apartments, and now came into her presence with respectful eagerness to inquire for his cousin's health. The young duke had been at pains to set off his noble features and elegant figure by a magnificent dress covered with golden fleur-de-lys and glittering with precious stones. His doublet of scarlet velvet and cap of the same showed up by their own splendour the warm colouring of his skin, while his face seemed illumined by his black eyes that shone keen as an eagle's.

Charles spoke long with his cousin of the people's enthusiasm

on her accession and of the brilliant destiny before her; he drew a hasty but truthful sketch of the state of the kingdom; and while he lavished praises on the queen's wisdom, he cleverly pointed out what reforms were most urgently needed by the country; he contrived to put so much warmth, yet so much reserve, into his speech that he destroyed the disagreeable impression his arrival had produced. In spite of the irregularities of her youth and the depravity brought about by her wretched education, Joan's nature impelled her to noble action: when the welfare of her subjects was concerned, she rose above the limitations of her age and sex, and, forgetting her strange position, listened to the Duke of Durazzo with the liveliest interest and the kindliest attention. He then hazarded allusions to the dangers that beset a young queen, spoke vaguely of the difficulty in distinguishing between true devotion and cowardly complaisance or interested attachment; he spoke of the ingratitude of many who had been loaded with benefits, and had been most completely trusted. Joan, who had just learned the truth of his words by sad experience, replied with a sigh, and after a moment's silence added—

"May God, whom I call to witness for the loyalty and uprightness of my intentions, may God unmask all traitors and show me my true friends! I know that the burden laid upon me is heavy, and I presume not on my strength, but I trust that the tried experience of those counsellors to whom my uncle entrusted me, the support of my family, and your warm and sincere friendship above all, my dear cousin, will help me to accomplish my duty."

"My sincerest prayer is that you may succeed, my fair cousin, and I will not darken with doubts and fears a time that ought to be given up to joy; I will not mingle with the shouts of gladness that rise on all sides to proclaim you queen, any vain regrets over that blind fortune which has placed beside the woman whom we all alike adore, whose single glance would make a man more blest than the angels, a foreigner unworthy of your love and unworthy of your throne."

"You forget, Charles," said the queen, putting out her hand

as though to check his words, "André is my husband, and it was my grandfather's will that he should reign with me."

"Never!" cried the duke indignantly; "he King of Naples! Nay, dream that the town is shaken to its very foundations, that the people rise as one man, that our church bells sound anew Sicilian vespers, before the people of Naples will endure the rule of a handful of wild Hungarian drunkards, a deformed canting monk, a prince detested by them even as you are beloved!"

"But why is André blamed? What has he done?"

"What has he done? Why is he blamed, madam? The people blame him as stupid, coarse, a savage; the nobles blame him for ignoring their privileges and openly supporting men of obscure birth; and I, madam,"—here he lowered his voice,—"I blame him for making you unhappy."

Joan shuddered as though a wound had been touched by an unkind hand; but hiding her emotion beneath an appearance of calm, she replied in a voice of perfect indifference—

"You must be dreaming, Charles; who has given you leave to suppose I am unhappy?"

"Do not try to excuse him, my dear cousin," replied Charles eagerly; "you will injure yourself without saving him."

The queen looked fixedly at her cousin, as though she would read him through and through and find out the meaning of his words; but as she could not give credence to the horrible thought that crossed her mind, she assumed a complete confidence in her cousin's friendship, with a view to discovering his plans, and said carelessly—

"Well, Charles, suppose I am not happy, what remedy could you offer me that I might escape my lot?"

"You ask me that, my dear cousin? Are not all remedies good when you suffer, and when you wish for revenge?"

"One must fly to those means that are possible. André will not readily give up his pretensions: he has a party of his own, and in case of open rupture, his brother the King of Hungary may declare war upon us, and bring ruin and desolation upon our kingdom."

The Duke of Duras faintly smiled, and his countenance assumed a sinister expression.

"You do not understand me," he said.

"Then explain without circumlocution," said the queen, trying to conceal the convulsive shudder that ran through her limbs.

"Listen, Joan," said Charles, taking his cousin's hand and laying it upon his heart: "can you feel that dagger?"

"I can," said Joan, and she turned pale.

"One word from you—and——"

"Yes?"

"To-morrow you will be free."

"A murder!" cried Joan, recoiling in horror: "then I was not deceived; it is a murder that you have proposed."

"It is a necessity," said the duke calmly: "to-day I advise; later on you will give your orders."

"Enough, wretch! I cannot tell if you are more cowardly or more rash: cowardly, because you reveal a criminal plot feeling sure that I shall never denounce you; rash, because in revealing it to me you cannot tell what witnesses are near to hear it all."

"In any case, madam, since I have put myself in your hands, you must perceive that I cannot leave you till I know if I must look upon myself as your friend or as your enemy."

"Leave me," cried Joan, with a disdainful gesture; "you insult your queen."

"You forget, my dear cousin, that some day I may very likely have a claim to your kingdom."

"Do not force me to have you turned out of this room," said Joan, advancing towards the door.

"Now do not get excited, my fair cousin; I am going: but at least remember that I offered you my hand and you refused it. Remember what I say at this solemn moment: to-day I am the guilty man; some day perhaps I may be the judge."

He went away slowly, twice turning his head, repeating in the language of signs his menacing prophecy. Joan hid her face in her hands, and for a long time remained plunged in

dismal reflections; then anger got the better of all her other feelings, and she summoned Doña Cancha, bidding her not to allow anybody to enter, on any pretext whatsoever.

This prohibition was not for the Count of Artois, for the reader will remember that he was in the adjoining room.

CHAPTER III

NIGHT fell, and from the Molo to the Mergellina, from the Capuano Castle to the hill of St. Elmo, deep silence had succeeded the myriad sounds that go up from the noisiest city in the world. Charles of Durazzo, quickly walking away from the square of the Correggi, first casting one last look of vengeance at the Castel Nuovo, plunged into the labyrinth of dark streets that twist and turn, cross and recross one another, in this ancient city, and after a quarter of an hour's walking, that was first slow, then very rapid, arrived at his ducal palace near the church of San Giovanni al Mare. He gave certain instructions in a harsh, peremptory tone to a page who took his sword and cloak. Then Charles shut himself into his room, without going up to see his poor mother, who was weeping, sad and solitary, over her son's ingratitude, and like every other mother taking her revenge by praying God to bless him.

The Duke of Durazzo walked up and down his room several times like a lion in a cage, counting the minutes in a fever of impatience, and was on the point of summoning a servant and renewing his commands, when two dull raps on the door informed him that the person he was waiting for had arrived. He opened at once, and a man of about fifty, dressed in black from head to foot, entered, humbly bowing, and carefully shut the door behind him. Charles threw himself into an easy-chair, and gazing fixedly at the man who stood before him, his eyes on the ground and his arms crossed upon his breast in an attitude of the deepest respect and blind obedience, he said slowly, as though weighing each word—

"Master Nicholas of Melazzo, have you any remembrance left of the services I once rendered you?"

The man to whom these words were addressed trembled in every limb, as if he heard the voice of Satan come to claim his soul; then lifting a look of terror to his questioner's face, he asked in a voice of gloom—

"What have I done, my lord, to deserve this reproach?"

"It is not a reproach: I ask a simple question."

"Can my lord doubt for a moment of my eternal gratitude? Can I forget the favours your Excellency showed me? Even if I could so lose my reason and my memory, are not my wife and son ever here to remind me that to you we owe all—our life, our honour, and our fortune? I was guilty of an infamous act," said the notary, lowering his voice, "a crime that would not only have brought upon my head the penalty of death, but which meant the confiscation of my goods, the ruin of my family, poverty and shame for my only son—that very son, sire, for whom I, miserable wretch, had wished to ensure a brilliant future by means of my frightful crime: you had in your hands the proofs of this——"

"I have them still."

"And you will not ruin me, my lord," resumed the notary, trembling; "I am at your feet, your Excellency; take my life and I will die in torment without a murmur, but save my son, since you have been so merciful as to spare him till now; have pity on his mother; my lord, have pity!"

"Be assured," said Charles, signing to him to rise; "it is nothing to do with your life; that will come later, perhaps. What I wish to ask of you now is a much simpler, easier matter."

"My lord, I await your command."

"First," said the duke, in a voice of playful irony, "you must draw up a formal contract of my marriage."

"At once, your Excellency."

"You are to write in the first article that my wife brings me as dowry the county of Alba, the jurisdiction of Grati and Giordano, with all castles, fiefs, and lands dependent thereto."

"But, my lord——" replied the poor notary, greatly embarrassed.

"Do you find any difficulty, Master Nicholas?"

"God forbid, your Excellency, but——"

"Well, what is it?"

"Because, if my lord will permit—because there is only one person in Naples who possesses that dowry your Excellency mentions."

"And so?"

"And she," stammered the notary, embarrassed more and more,—"she is the queen's sister."

"And in the contract you will write the name of Marie of Anjou."

"But the young maiden," replied Nicholas timidly, "whom your Excellency would marry is destined, I thought, under the will of our late king of blessed memory, to become the wife of the King of Hungary or else of the grandson of the King of France."

"Ah, I understand your surprise: you may learn from this that an uncle's intentions are not always the same as his nephew's."

"In that case, sire, if I dared—if my lord would deign to give me leave—if I had an opinion I might give, I would humbly entreat your Excellency to reflect that this would mean the abduction of a minor."

"Since when did you learn to be scrupulous, Master Nicholas?"

These words were uttered with a glance so terrible that the poor notary was crushed, and had hardly the strength to reply—

"In an hour the contract will be ready."

"Good: we agree as to the first point," continued Charles, resuming his natural tone of voice. "You now will hear my second charge. You have known the Duke of Calabria's valet for the last two years pretty intimately?"

"Tommaso Pace; why, he is my best friend."

"Excellent. Listen, and remember that on your discretion the safety or ruin of your family depends. A plot will soon be on foot against the queen's husband; the conspirators no doubt will gain over André's valet, the man you call your best friend; never leave him for an instant, try to be his shadow;

day by day and hour by hour come to me and report the progress of the plot, the names of the plotters."

"Is this all your Excellency's command?"

"All."

The notary respectfully bowed, and withdrew to put the orders at once into execution. Charles spent the rest of that night writing to his uncle the Cardinal de Perigord, one of the most influential prelates at the court of Avignon. He begged him before all things to use his authority so as to prevent Pope Clement VI from signing the bull that would sanction André's coronation, and he ended his letter by earnestly entreating his uncle to win the pope's consent to his marriage with the queen's sister.

"We shall see, fair cousin," he said as he sealed his letter, "which of us is best at understanding where our interest lies. You would not have me as a friend, so you shall have me as an enemy. Sleep on in the arms of your lover: I will wake you when the time comes. I shall be Duke of Calabria perhaps some day, and that title, as you well know, belongs to the heir to the throne."

The next day and on the following days a remarkable change took place in the behaviour of Charles towards André: he showed him signs of great friendliness, cleverly flattering his inclinations, and even persuading Friar Robert that, far from feeling any hostility in the matter of André's coronation, his most earnest desire was that his uncle's wishes should be respected; and that, though he might have given the impression of acting contrary to them, it had only been done with a view to appeasing the populace, who in their first excitement might have been stirred up to insurrection against the Hungarians. He declared with much warmth that he heartily detested the people about the queen, whose counsels tended to lead her astray, and he promised to join Friar Robert in the endeavour to get rid of Joan's favourites by all such means as fortune might put at his disposal. Although the Dominican did not believe in the least in the sincerity of his ally's protestations, he yet gladly welcomed the aid which might prove so useful

to the prince's cause, and attributed the sudden change of front to some recent rupture between Charles and his cousin, promising himself that he would make capital out of his resentment. Be that as it might, Charles wormed himself into André's heart, and after a few days one of them could hardly be seen without the other. If André went out hunting, his greatest pleasure in life, Charles was eager to put his pack or his falcons at his disposal; if André rode through the town, Charles was always ambling by his side. He gave way to his whims, urged him to extravagances, and inflamed his angry passions: in a word, he was the good angel—or the bad one—who inspired his every thought and guided his every action.

Joan soon understood this business, and as a fact had expected it. She could have ruined Charles with a single word; but she scorned so base a revenge, and treated him with utter contempt. Thus the court was split into two factions: the Hungarians with Friar Robert at their head and supported by Charles of Durazzo; on the other side all the nobility of Naples, led by the Princes of Tarentum. Joan, influenced by the grand seneschal's widow and her two daughters, the Countesses of Terlizzi and Morcone, and also by Doña Cancha and the Empress of Constantinople, took the side of the Neapolitan party against the pretensions of her husband. The partisans of the queen made it their first care to have her name inscribed upon all public acts without adding André's; but Joan, led by an instinct of right and justice amid all the corruption of her court, had only consented to this last after she had taken counsel with André d'Isernia, a very learned lawyer of the day, respected as much for his lofty character as for his great learning. The prince, annoyed at being shut out in this way, began to act in a violent and despotic manner. On his own authority he released prisoners; he showered favours upon Hungarians, and gave especial honours and rich gifts to Giovanni Pipino, Count of Altanuera, the enemy of all others most dreaded and detested by the Neapolitan barons. Then the Counts of San Severino, Mileto, Terlizzi and Balzo, Calanzaro and Sant' Angelo, and most of the grandees, exasperated by the haughty insolence

of André's favourite, which grew every day more outrageous, decided that he must perish, and his master with him, should he persist in attacking their privileges and defying their anger.

Moreover, the women who were about Joan at the court egged her on, each one urged by a private interest, in the pursuit of her fresh passion. Poor Joan, neglected by her husband and betrayed by Robert of Cabane, gave way beneath the burden of duties beyond her strength to bear, and fled for refuge to the arms of Bertrand of Artois, whose love she did not even attempt to resist; for every feeling for religion and virtue had been destroyed in her of set purpose, and her young inclinations had been early bent towards vice, just as the bodies of wretched children are bent and their bones broken by jugglers when they train them. Bertrand himself felt an adoration for her surpassing ordinary human passion. When he reached the summit of a happiness to which in his wildest dreams he had never dared to aspire, the young count nearly lost his reason. In vain had his father, Charles of Artois (who was Count of Aire, a direct descendant of Philip the Bold, and one of the regents of the kingdom), attempted by severe admonitions to stop him while yet on the brink of the precipice: Bertrand would listen to nothing but his love for Joan and his implacable hatred for all the queen's enemies. Many a time, at the close of day, as the breeze from Posilippo or Sorrento coming from far away was playing in his hair, might Bertrand be seen leaning from one of the casements of Castel Nuovo, pale and motionless, gazing fixedly from his side of the square to where the Duke of Calabria and the Duke of Durazzo came galloping home from their evening ride side by side in a cloud of dust. Then the brows of the young count were violently contracted, a savage sinister look shone in his blue eyes once so innocent, like lightning a thought of death and vengeance flashed into his mind; he would all at once begin to tremble, as a light hand was laid upon his shoulder; he would turn softly, fearing lest the divine apparition should vanish to the skies; but there beside him stood a young girl, with cheeks aflame and heaving breast, with brilliant liquid eyes: she had come to tell how

her past day had been spent, and to offer her forehead for the kiss that should reward her labours and unwilling absence. This woman, dictator of laws and administrator of justice among grave magistrates and stern ministers, was but fifteen years old; this man, who knew her griefs, and to avenge them was meditating regicide, was not yet twenty: two children of earth, the playthings of an awful destiny!

Two months and a few days after the old king's death, on the morning of Friday the 28th of March of the same year, 1343, the widow of the grand seneschal, Philippa, who had already contrived to get forgiven for the shameful trick she had used to secure all her son's wishes, entered the queen's apartments, excited by a genuine fear, pale and distracted, the bearer of news that spread terror and lamentation throughout the court: Marie, the queen's younger sister, had disappeared.

The gardens and outside courts had been searched for any trace of her; every corner of the castle had been examined; the guards had been threatened with torture, so as to drag the truth from them; no one had seen anything of the princess, and nothing could be found that suggested either flight or abduction. Joan, struck down by this new blow in the midst of other troubles, was for a time utterly prostrated; then, when she had recovered from her first surprise, she behaved as all people do if despair takes the place of reason: she gave orders for what was already done to be done again, she asked the same questions that could only bring the same answers, and poured forth vain regrets and unjust reproaches. The news spread through the town, causing the greatest astonishment: there arose a great commotion in the castle, and the members of the regency hastily assembled, while couriers were sent out in every direction, charged to promise 12,000 ducats to whomsoever should discover the place where the princess was concealed. Proceedings were at once taken against the soldiers who were on guard at the fortress at the time of the disappearance.

Bertrand of Artois drew the queen apart, telling her his suspicions, which fell directly upon Charles of Durazzo; but

Joan lost no time in persuading him of the improbability of his hypothesis: first of all, Charles had never once set his foot in Castel Nuovo since the day of his stormy interview with the queen, but had made a point of always leaving André by the bridge when he came to the town with him; besides, it had never been noticed, even in the past, that the young duke had spoken to Marie or exchanged looks with her: the result of all attainable evidence was, that no stranger had entered the castle the evening before except a notary named Master Nicholas of Melazzo, an old person, half silly, half fanatical, for whom Tommaso Pace, valet de chambre to the Duke of Calabria, was ready to answer with his life. Bertrand yielded to the queen's reasoning, and day by day advanced new suggestions, each less probable than the last, to draw his mistress on to feel a hope that he was far from feeling himself.

But a month later, and precisely on the morning of Monday the 30th of April, a strange and unexpected scene took place, an exhibition of boldness transcending all calculations. The Neapolitan people were stupefied in astonishment, and the grief of Joan and her friends was changed to indignation. Just as the clock of San Giovanni struck twelve, the gate of the magnificent palace of the Durazzo flung open its folding doors, and there came forth to the sound of trumpets a double file of cavaliers on richly caparisoned horses, with the duke's arms on their shields. They took up their station round the house to prevent the people outside from disturbing a ceremony which was to take place before the eyes of an immense crowd, assembled suddenly, as by a miracle, upon the square. At the back of the court stood an altar, and upon the steps lay two crimson velvet cushions embroidered with the fleur-de-lys of France and the ducal crown. Charles came forward, clad in a dazzling dress, and holding by the hand the queen's sister, the Princess Marie, at that time almost thirteen years of age. She knelt down timidly on one of the cushions, and when Charles had done the same, the grand almoner of the Duras house asked the young duke solemnly what was his intention in appearing thus humbly before a minister of the Church. At these

words Master Nicholas of Melazzo took his place on the left of the altar, and read in a firm, clear voice, first, the contract of marriage between Charles and Marie, and then the apostolic letters from His Holiness the sovereign pontiff, Clement VI, who in his own name removing all obstacles that might impede the union, such as the age of the young bride and the degrees of affinity between the two parties, authorised his dearly beloved son Charles, Duke of Durazzo and Albania, to take in marriage the most illustrious Marie of Anjou, sister of Joan, Queen of Naples and Jerusalem, and bestowed his benediction on the pair.

The almoner then took the young girl's hand, and placing it in that of Charles, pronounced the prayers of the Church. Charles, turning half round to the people, said in a loud voice—

"Before God and man, this woman is my wife."

"And this man is my husband," said Marie, trembling.

"Long live the Duke and Duchess of Durazzo!" cried the crowd, clapping their hands. And the young pair, at once mounting two beautiful horses and followed by their cavaliers and pages, solemnly paraded through the town, and re-entered their palace to the sound of trumpets and cheering.

When this incredible news was brought to the queen, her first feeling was joy at the recovery of her sister; and when Bertrand of Artois was eager to head a band of barons and cavaliers and bent on falling upon the cortège to punish the traitor, Joan put up her hand to stop him with a very mournful look.

"Alas!" she said sadly, "it is too late. They are legally married, for the head of the Church—who is moreover by my grandfather's will the head of our family—has granted his permission. I only pity my poor sister; I pity her for becoming so young the prey of a wretched man who sacrifices her to his own ambition, hoping by this marriage to establish a claim to the throne. O God! what a strange fate oppresses the royal house of Anjou! My father's early death in the midst of his triumphs; my mother's so quickly after; my sister and I, the sole offspring of Charles I, both before we are women grown fallen into the hands of cowardly men, who use us but as the

stepping-stones of their ambition!" Joan fell back exhausted on her chair, a burning tear trembling on her eyelid.

"This is the second time," said Bertrand reproachfully, "that I have drawn my sword to avenge an insult offered to you, the second time I return it by your orders to the scabbard. But remember, Joan, the third time will not find me so docile, and then it will not be Robert of Cabane or Charles of Durazzo that I shall strike, but him who is the cause of all your misfortunes."

"Have mercy, Bertrand! do not you also speak these words; whenever this horrible thought takes hold of me, let me come to you: this threat of bloodshed that is drummed into my ears, this sinister vision that haunts my sight; let me come to you, beloved, and weep upon your bosom, beneath your breath cool my burning fancies, from your eyes draw some little courage to revive my perishing soul. Come, I am quite unhappy enough without needing to poison the future by an endless remorse. Tell me rather to forgive and to forget, speak not of hatred and revenge; show me one ray of hope amid the darkness that surrounds me; hold up my wavering feet, and push me not into the abyss."

Such altercations as this were repeated as often as any fresh wrong arose from the side of André or his party; and in proportion as the attacks made by Bertrand and his friends gained in vehemence—and we must add, in justice—so did Joan's objections weaken. The Hungarian rule, as it became more and more arbitrary and unbearable, irritated men's minds to such a point, that the people murmured in secret and the nobles proclaimed aloud their discontent. André's soldiers indulged in a libertinage which would have been intolerable in a conquered city: they were found everywhere brawling in the taverns or rolling about disgustingly drunk in the gutters; and the prince, far from rebuking such orgies, was accused of sharing them himself. His former tutor, who ought to have felt bound to drag him away from so ignoble a mode of life, rather strove to immerse him in degrading pleasures, so as to keep him out of business matters; without suspecting it, he

was hurrying on the denouement of the terrible drama that was being acted behind the scenes at Castel Nuovo. Robert's widow, Doña Sancha of Aragon, the good and sainted lady whom our readers may possibly have forgotten, as her family had done, seeing that God's anger was hanging over her house, and that no counsels, no tears or prayers of hers could avail to arrest it, after wearing mourning for her husband one whole year, according to her promise, had taken the veil at the convent of Santa Maria della Croce, and deserted the court and its follies and passions, just as the prophets of old, turning their back on some accursed city, would shake the dust from off their sandals and depart. Sancha's retreat was a sad omen, and soon the family dissensions, long with difficulty suppressed, sprang forth to open view; the storm that had been threatening from afar broke suddenly over the town, and the thunderbolt was shortly to follow.

On the last day of August 1344, Joan rendered homage to Americ, Cardinal of Saint Martin and legate of Clement VI, who looked upon the kingdom of Naples as being a fief of the Church ever since the time when his predecessors had presented it to Charles of Anjou, and overthrown and excommunicated the house of Suabia. For this solemn ceremony the church of Saint Clara was chosen, the burial-place of Neapolitan kings, and but lately the tomb of the grandfather and father of the young queen, who reposed to right and left of the high altar. Joan, clad in the royal robe, with the crown upon her head, uttered her oath of fidelity between the hands of the apostolic legate in the presence of her husband, who stood behind her simply as a witness, just like the other princes of the blood. Among the prelates with their pontifical insignia who formed the brilliant following of the envoy, there stood the Archbishops of Pisa, Bari, Capua, and Brindisi, and the reverend fathers Ugolino, Bishop of Castella, and Philip, Bishop of Cavaillon, chancellor to the queen. All the nobility of Naples and Hungary were present at this ceremony, which debarred André from the throne in a fashion at once formal and striking. Thus, when they left the church the excited

feelings of both parties made a crisis imminent, and such hostile glances, such threatening words were exchanged, that the prince, finding himself too weak to contend against his enemies, wrote the same evening to his mother, telling her that he was about to leave a country where from his infancy upwards he had experienced nothing but deceit and disaster.

Those who know a mother's heart will easily guess that Elizabeth of Poland was no sooner aware of the danger that threatened her son than she travelled to Naples, arriving there before her coming was suspected. Rumour spread abroad that the Queen of Hungary had come to take her son away with her, and the unexpected event gave rise to strange comments: the fever of excitement now blazed up in another direction. The Empress of Constantinople, the Catanese, her two daughters, and all the courtiers, whose calculations were upset by André's departure, hurried to honour the arrival of the Queen of Hungary by offering a very cordial and respectful reception, with a view to showing her that, in the midst of a court so attentive and devoted, any isolation or bitterness of feeling on the young prince's part must spring from his pride, from an unwarrantable mistrust, and his naturally savage and untrained character. Joan received her husband's mother with so much proper dignity in her behaviour that, in spite of preconceived notions, Elizabeth could not help admiring the noble seriousness and earnest feeling she saw in her daughter-in-law. To make the visit more pleasant to an honoured guest, fêtes and tournaments were given, the barons vying with one another in display of wealth and luxury. The Empress of Constantinople, the Catanese, Charles of Duras and his young wife, all paid the utmost attention to the mother of the prince. Marie, who by reason of her extreme youth and gentleness of character had no share in any intrigues, was guided quite as much by her natural feeling as by her husband's orders when she offered to the Queen of Hungary those marks of regard and affection that she might have felt for her own mother. In spite, however, of these protestations of respect and love, Elizabeth of Poland trembled for her son, and, obeying a maternal instinct, chose to abide by her original inten-

tion, believing that she should never feel safe until André was far away from a court in appearance so friendly but in reality so treacherous. The person who seemed most disturbed by the departure, and tried to hinder it by every means in his power, was Friar Robert. Immersed in his political schemes, bending over his mysterious plans with all the eagerness of a gambler who is on the point of gaining, the Dominican, who thought himself on the eve of a tremendous event, who by cunning, patience, and labour hoped to scatter his enemies and to reign as absolute autocrat, now falling suddenly from the edifice of his dream, stiffened himself by a mighty effort to stand and resist the mother of his pupil. But fear cried too loud in the heart of Elizabeth for all the reasonings of the monk to lull it to rest: to every argument he advanced she simply said that while her son was not king and had not entire unlimited power, it was imprudent to leave him exposed to his enemies. The monk, seeing that all was indeed lost and that he could not contend against the fears of this woman, asked only the boon of three days' grace, at the end of which time, should a reply he was expecting have not arrived, he said he would not only give up his opposition to André's departure, but would follow himself, renouncing for ever a scheme to which he had sacrificed everything.

Towards the end of the third day, as Elizabeth was definitely making her preparations for departure, the monk entered radiant. Showing her a letter which he had just hastily broken open, he cried triumphantly—

"God be praised, madam! I can at last give you incontestable proofs of my active zeal and accurate foresight."

André's mother, after rapidly running through the document, turned her eyes on the monk with yet some traces of mistrust in her manner, not venturing to give way to her sudden joy.

"Yes, madam," said the monk, raising his head, his plain features lighted up by his glance of intelligence—"yes, madam, you will believe your eyes, perhaps, though you would never believe my words: this is not the dream of an active imagination, the hallucination of a credulous mind, the prejudice of a

limited intellect; it is a plan slowly conceived, painfully worked out, my daily thought and my whole life's work. I have never ignored the fact that at the court of Avignon your son had powerful enemies; but I knew also that on the very day I undertook a certain solemn engagement in the prince's name, an engagement to withdraw those laws that had caused coldness between the pope and Robert, who was in general so devoted to the Church, I knew very well that my offer would never be rejected, and this argument of mine I kept back for the last. See, madam, my calculations are correct; your enemies are put to shame and your son is triumphant."

Then turning to André, who was just coming in and stood dumbfounded at the threshold on hearing the last words, he added—

"Come, my son, our prayers are at last fulfilled: you are king."

"King!" repeated André, transfixed with joy, doubt, and amazement.

"King of Sicily and Jerusalem: yes, my lord; there is no need for you to read this document that brings the joyful, unexpected news. You can see it in your mother's tears; she holds out her arms to press you to her bosom; you can see it in the happiness of your old teacher; he falls on his knees at your feet to salute you by this title, which he would have paid for with his own blood had it been denied to you much longer."

"And yet," said Elizabeth, after a moment's mournful reflection, "if I obey my presentiments, your news will make no difference to our plans for departure."

"Nay, mother," said André firmly, "you would not force me to quit the country to the detriment of my honour. If I have made you feel some of the bitterness and sorrow that have spoiled my own young days because of my cowardly enemies, it is not from a poor spirit, but because I was powerless, and knew it, to take any sort of striking vengeance for their secret insults, their crafty injuries, their underhand intrigues. It was not because my arm wanted strength, but because my head wanted a crown. I might have put an end to some of these wretched beings, the least dangerous maybe; but it would have been striking in the

dark; the ringleaders would have escaped, and I should never have really got to the bottom of their infernal plots. So I have silently eaten out my own heart in shame and indignation. Now that my sacred rights are recognised by the Church, you will see, my mother, how these terrible barons, the queen's counsellors, the governors of the kingdom, will lower their heads in the dust: for they are threatened with no sword and no struggle; no peer of their own is he who speaks, but the king; it is by him they are accused, by the law they shall be condemned, and shall suffer on the scaffold."

"O my beloved son," cried the queen in tears, "I never doubted your noble feelings or the justice of your claims; but when your life is in danger, to what voice can I listen but the voice of fear? what can move my counsels but the promptings of love?"

"Mother, believe me, if the hands and hearts alike of these cowards had not trembled, you would have lost your son long ago."

"It is not violence that I fear, my son, it is treachery."

"My life, like every man's, belongs to God, and the lowest of sbirri may take it as I turn the corner of the street; but a king owes something to his people."

The poor mother long tried to bend the resolution of André by reason and entreaties; but when she had spoken her last word and shed her last tear, she summoned Bertram de Baux, chief-justice of the kingdom, and Marie, Duchess of Durazzo. Trusting in the old man's wisdom and the girl's innocence, she commended her son to them in the tenderest and most affecting words; then drawing from her own hand a ring richly wrought, and taking the prince aside, she slipped it upon his finger, saying in a voice that trembled with emotion as she pressed him to her heart—

"My son, as you refuse to come with me, here is a wonderful talisman, which I would not use before the last extremity. So long as you wear this ring on your finger, neither sword nor poison will have power against you."

"You see then, mother," said the prince, smiling, "with this protection there is no reason at all to fear for my life."

There are other dangers than sword or poison," sighed the queen.

"Be calm, mother: the best of all talismans is your prayer to God for me: it is the tender thought of you that will keep me for ever in the path of duty and justice; your maternal love will watch over me from afar, and cover me like the wings of a guardian angel."

Elizabeth sobbed as she embraced her son, and when she left him she felt her heart was breaking. At last she made up her mind to go, and was escorted by the whole court, who had never changed towards her for a moment in their chivalrous and respectful devotion. The poor mother, pale, trembling, and faint, leaned heavily upon André's arm, lest she should fall. On the ship that was to take her for ever from her son, she cast her arms for the last time about his neck, and there hung a long time, speechless, tearless, and motionless; when the signal for departure was given, her women took her in their arms half swooning. André stood on the shore with the feeling of death at his heart: his eyes were fixed upon the sail that carried ever farther from him the only being he loved in the world. Suddenly he fancied he beheld something white moving a long way off: his mother had recovered her senses by a great effort, and had dragged herself up to the bridge to give a last signal of farewell: the unhappy lady knew too well that she would never see her son again.

At almost the same moment that André's mother left the kingdom, the former queen of Naples, Robert's widow, Doña Sancha, breathed her last sigh. She was buried in the convent of Santa Maria della Croce, under the name of Clara, which she had assumed on taking her vows as a nun, as her epitaph tells us, as follows:—

"Here lies, an example of great humility, the body of the sainted sister Clara, of illustrious memory, otherwise Sancha, Queen of Sicily and Jerusalem, widow of the most serene Robert, King of Jerusalem and Sicily, who, after the death of the king her husband, when she had completed a year of widowhood, exchanged goods temporary for goods eternal. Adopting for the love of God a voluntary poverty, and distributing her goods

to the poor, she took upon her the rule of obedience in this celebrated convent of Santa Croce, the work of her own hands, in the year 1344, on the 21st of January of the twelfth indiction, where living a life of holiness under the rule of the blessed Francis, father of the poor, she ended her days religiously in the year of our Lord 1345, on the 28th of July of the thirteenth indiction. On the day following she was buried in this tomb."

The death of Doña Sancha served to hasten on the catastrophe which was to stain the throne of Naples with blood: one might almost fancy that God wished to spare this angel of love and resignation the sight of so terrible a spectacle; that she offered herself as a propitiatory sacrifice to redeem the crimes of her family.

CHAPTER IV

EIGHT days after the funeral of the old queen, Bertrand of Artois came to Joan, pale, distraught, dishevelled, in a state of agitation and confusion impossible to describe.

Joan went quickly up to her lover, asking him with a look of fear to explain the cause of his distress.

"I told you, madam," cried the young baron excitedly, "you will end by ruining us all, as you will never take any advice from me."

"For God's sake, Bertrand, speak plainly: what has happened? What advice have I neglected?"

"Madam, your noble husband, André of Hungary, has just been made King of Jerusalem and Sicily, and acknowledged by the court of Avignon, so henceforth you will be no better than his slave."

"Count of Artois, you are dreaming."

"No, madam, I am not dreaming: I have this fact to prove the truth of my words, that the pope's ambassadors are arrived at Capua with the bull for his coronation, and if they do not enter Castel Nuovo this very evening, the delay is only to give the new king time to make his preparations."

The queen bent her head as if a thunderbolt had fallen at her feet.

"When I told you before," said the count, with growing fury, "that we ought to use force to make a stand against him, that we ought to break the yoke of this infamous tyranny and get rid of the man before he had the means of hurting you, you always drew back in childish fear, with a woman's cowardly hesitation."

Joan turned a tearful look upon her lover.

"God, my God!" she cried, clasping her hands in desperation, "am I to hear for ever this awful cry of death! You too, Bertrand, you too say the word, like Robert of Cabane, like Charles of Duras? Wretched man, why would you raise this bloody spectre between us, to check with icy hand our adulterous kisses? Enough of such crimes; if his wretched ambition makes him long to reign, let him be king: what matters his power to me, if he leaves me with your love?"

"It is not so sure that our love will last much longer."

"What is this, Bertand? You rejoice in this merciless torture."

"I tell you, madam, that the King of Naples has a black flag ready, and on the day of his coronation it will be carried before him."

"And you believe," said Joan, pale as a corpse in its shroud, —"you believe that this flag is a threat?"

"Ay, and the threat begins to be put in execution."

The queen staggered, and leaned against a table to save herself from falling.

"Tell me all," she cried in a choking voice; "fear not to shock me; see, I am not trembling. O Bertrand, I entreat you!"

"The traitors have begun with the man you most esteemed, the wisest counsellor of the crown, the best of magistrates, the noblest-hearted, most rigidly virtuous——"

"Andrea of Isernia!"

"Madam, he is no more."

Joan uttered a cry, as though the noble old man had been slain before her eyes: she respected him as a father; then, sinking back, she remained profoundly silent.

"How did they kill him?" she asked at last, fixing her great eyes in terror on the count.

"Yesterday evening, as he left this castle, on the way to his own home, a man suddenly sprang out upon him before the Porta Petruccia: it was one of André's favourites, Conrad of Gottis, chosen no doubt because he had a grievance against the incorruptible magistrate on account of some sentence passed

against him, and the murder would therefore be put down to motives of private revenge. The cowardly wretch gave a sign to two or three companions, who surrounded the victim and robbed him of all means of escape. The poor old man looked fixedly at his assassin, and asked him what he wanted. 'I want you to lose your life at my hands, as I lost my case at yours!' cried the murderer; and leaving him no time to answer, he ran him through with his sword. Then the rest fell upon the poor man, who did not even try to call for help, and his body was riddled with wounds and horribly mutilated, and then left bathed in its blood."

"Terrible!" murmured the queen, covering her face.

"It was only their first effort: the proscription lists are already full: André must needs have blood to celebrate his accession to the throne of Naples. And do you know, Joan, whose name stands first in the doomed list?"

"Whose?" cried the queen, shuddering from head to foot.

"Mine," said the count calmly.

"Yours!" cried Joan, drawing herself up to her full height; "are you to be killed next! Oh, be careful, André; you have pronounced your own death-sentence. Long have I turned aside the dagger pointing to your breast, but you put an end to all my patience. Woe to you, Prince of Hungary! the blood which you have spilt shall fall on your own head."

As she spoke she had lost her pallor: her lovely face was fired with revenge, her eyes flashed lightning. This child of sixteen was terrible to behold: she pressed her lover's hand with convulsive tenderness, and clung to him as if she would screen him with her own body.

"Your anger is awakened too late," said he gently and sadly; for at this moment Joan seemed so lovely that he could reproach her with nothing. "You do not know that his mother has left him a talisman preserving him from sword and poison?"

"He will die," said Joan firmly: the smile that lighted up her face was so unnatural that the count was dismayed, and dropped his eyes.

The next day the young Queen of Naples, lovelier, more smiling than ever, sitting carelessly in a graceful attitude beside a window which looked out on the magnificent view of the bay, was busy weaving a cord of silk and gold. The sun had run nearly two-thirds of his fiery course, and was gradually sinking his rays in the clear blue waters where Posilippo's head is reflected with its green and flowery crown. A warm, balmy breeze that had passed over the orange trees of Sorrento and Amalfi felt deliciously refreshing to the inhabitants of the capital, who had succumbed to torpor in the enervating softness of the day. The whole town was waking from a long siesta, breathing freely after a sleepy interval: the Molo was covered with a crowd of eager people dressed out in the brightest colours; the many cries of a festival, joyous songs, love ditties sounded from all quarters of the vast amphitheatre, which is one of the chief marvels of creation: they came to the ears of Joan, and she listened as she bent over her work, absorbed in deep thought. Suddenly, when she seemed most busily occupied, the indefinable feeling of someone near at hand, and the touch of something on her shoulder, made her start: she turned as though waked from a dream by contact with a serpent, and perceived her husband, magnificently dressed, carelessly leaning against the back of her chair. For a long time past the prince had not come to his wife in this familiar fashion, and to the queen the pretence of affection and careless behaviour augured ill. André did not appear to notice the look of hatred and terror that had escaped Joan in spite of herself, and assuming the best expression of gentleness as that his straight hard features could contrive to put on in such circumstances as these, he smilingly asked—

"Why are you making this pretty cord, dear dutiful wife?"

"To hang you with, my lord," replied the queen, with a smile.

André shrugged his shoulders, seeing in the threat so incredibly rash nothing more than a pleasantry in rather bad taste. But when he saw that Joan resumed her work, he tried to renew the conversation.

"I admit," he said, in a perfectly calm voice, "that my

question is quite unnecessary: from your eagerness to finish this handsome piece of work, I ought to suspect that it is destined for some fine knight of yours whom you propose to send on a dangerous enterprise wearing your colours. If so, my fair queen, I claim to receive my orders from your lips: appoint the time and place for the trial, and I am sure beforehand of carrying off a prize that I shall dispute with all your adorers."

"That is not so certain," said Joan, "if you are as valiant in war as in love." And she cast on her husband a look at once seductive and scornful, beneath which the young man blushed up to his eyes.

"I hope," said André, repressing his feelings,—"I hope soon to give you such proofs of my affection that you will never doubt it again."

"And what makes you fancy that, my lord?"

"I would tell you, if you would listen seriously."

"I am listening."

"Well, it is a dream I had last night that gives me such confidence in the future."

"A dream! You surely ought to explain that."

"I dreamed that there was a grand ête in the town: an immense crowd filled the streets like an overflowing torrent, and the heavens were ringing with their shouts of joy; the gloomy granite façades were hidden by hangings of silk and festoons of flowers, the churches were decorated as though for some grand ceremony. I was riding side by side with you." Joan made a haughty movement. "Forgive me, madam, it was only a dream: I was on your right, riding a fine white horse, magnificently caparisoned, and the chief-justice of the kingdom carried before me a flag unfolded in sign of honour. After riding in triumph through the main thoroughfares of the city, we arrived, to the sound of trumpets and clarions, at the royal church of Saint Clara, where your grandfather and my uncle are buried, and there, before the high altar, the pope's ambassador laid your hand in mine and pronounced a long discourse, and then on our two heads in turn placed the crown

of Jerusalem and Sicily; after which the nobles and the people shouted in one voice, 'Long live the King and Queen of Naples!' And I, wishing to perpetuate the memory of so glorious a day, proceeded to create knights among the most zealous in our court."

"And do you not remember the names of the chosen persons whom you judged worthy of your royal favours?"

"Assuredly, madam: Bertrand, Count of Artois——"

"Enough, my lord; I excuse you from naming the rest: I always supposed you were loyal and generous, but you give me fresh proof of it by showing favour to men whom I most honour and trust. I cannot tell if your wishes are likely soon to be realised, but in any case feel sure of my perpetual gratitude."

Joan's voice did not betray the slightest emotion; her look had become kind, and the sweetest smile was on her lips. But in her heart André's death was from that moment decided upon. The prince, too much preoccupied with his own projects of vengeance, and too confident in his all-powerful talisman and his personal valour, had no suspicion that his plans could be anticipated. He conversed a long time with his wife in a chatting, friendly way, trying to spy out her secret, and exposing his own by his interrupted phrases and mysterious reserves. When he fancied that every cloud of former resentment, even the lightest, had disappeared from Joan's brow, he begged her to go with her suite on a magnificent hunting expedition that he was organising for the 20th of August, adding that such a kindness on her part would be for him a sure pledge of their reconciliation and complete forgetfulness of the past. Joan promised with a charming grace, and the prince retired fully satisfied with the interview, carrying with him the conviction that he had only to threaten to strike a blow at the queen's favourite to ensure her obedience, perhaps even her love.

But on the eve of the 20th of August a strange and terrible scene was being enacted in the basement storey of one of the lateral towers of Castel Nuovo. Charles of Durazzo, who had

never ceased to brood secretly over his infernal plans, had been informed by the notary whom he had charged to spy upon the conspirators, that on that particular evening they were about to hold a decisive meeting, and therefore, wrapped in a black cloak, he glided into the underground corridor and hid himself behind a pillar, there to await the issue of the conference. After two dreadful hours of suspense, every second marked out by the beating of his heart, Charles fancied he heard the sound of a door very carefully opened; the feeble ray of a lantern in the vault scarcely served to dispel the darkness, but a man coming away from the wall approached him walking like a living statue. Charles gave a slight cough, the sign agreed upon. The man put out his light and hid away the dagger he had drawn in case of a surprise.

"Is it you, Master Nicholas?" asked the duke in a low voice.

"It is I, my lord."

"What is it?"

"They have just fixed the prince's death for to-morrow, on his way to the hunt."

"Did you recognise every conspirator?"

"Every one, though their faces were masked; when they gave their vote for death, I knew them by their voices."

"Could you point out to me who they are?"

"Yes, this very minute; they are going to pass along at the end of this corridor. And see, here is Tommaso Pace walking in front of them to light their way."

Indeed, a tall spectral figure, black from head to foot, his face carefully hidden under a velvet mask, walked at the end of the corridor, lamp in hand, and stopped at the first step of a staircase which led to the upper floors. The conspirators advanced slowly, two by two, like a procession of ghosts, appeared for one moment in the circle of light made by the torch, and again disappeared into shadow.

"See, there are Charles and Bertrand of Artois," said the notary; "there are the Counts of Terlizzi and Catanzaro; the grand admiral and grand seneschal, Godfrey of Marsan, Count of Squillace, and Robert of Cabane, Count of Eboli; the two

women talking in a low voice with the eager gesticulations are Catherine of Tarentum, Empress of Constantinople, and Philippa the Catanese, the queen's governess and chief lady; there is Doña Cancha, chamberwoman and confidante of Joan; and there is the Countess of Morcone——"

The notary stopped on beholding a shadow alone, its head bowed, with arms hanging loosely, choking back her sobs beneath a hood of black.

"Who is the woman who seems to drag herself so painfully along in their train?" asked the duke, pressing his companion's arm.

"That woman," said the notary, "is the queen."

"Ah, now I see," thought Charles, breathing freely, with the same sort of satisfaction that Satan no doubt feels when a long coveted soul falls at length into his power.

"And now, my lord," continued Master Nicholas, when all had returned once more into silence and darkness, "if you have bidden me spy on these conspirators with a view to saving the young prince you are protecting with love and vigilance, you must hurry forward, for to-morrow maybe it will be too late."

"Follow me," cried the duke imperiously; "it is time you should know my real intention, and then carry out my orders with scrupulous exactness."

With these words he drew him aside to a place opposite to where the conspirators had just disappeared. The notary mechanically followed through a labyrinth of dark corridors and secret staircases, quite at a loss how to account for the sudden change that had come over his master: crossing one of the ante-chambers in the castle, they came upon André, who joyfully accosted them; grasping the hand of his cousin Duras in his affectionate manner, he asked him in a pressing way that would brook no refusal, "Will you be of our hunting party to-morrow, duke?"

"Excuse me, my lord," said Charles, bowing down to the ground; "it will be impossible for me to go to-morrow, for my wife is very unwell; but I entreat you to accept the best falcon I have."

And here he cast upon the notary a petrifying glance.

The morning of the 20th of August was fine and calm—the irony of nature contrasting cruelly with the fate of mankind. From break of day masters and valets, pages and knights, princes and courtiers, all were on foot; cries of joy were heard on every side when the queen arrived, on a snow-white horse, at the head of the young and brilliant throng. Joan was perhaps paler than usual, but that might be because she had been obliged to rise very early. André, mounted on one of the most fiery of all the steeds he had tamed, galloped beside his wife, noble and proud, happy in his own powers, his youth, and the thousand gilded hopes that a brilliant future seemed to offer. Never had the court of Naples shown so brave an aspect: every feeling of distrust and hatred seemed entirely forgotten; Friar Robert himself, suspicious as he was by nature, when he saw the joyous cavalcade go by under his window, looked out with pride, and stroking his beard, laughed at his own seriousness.

André's intention was to spend several days hunting between Capua and Aversa, and only to return to Naples when all was in readiness for his coronation. Thus the first day they hunted round about Melito, and went through two or three villages in the land of Labore. Towards evening the court stopped at Aversa, with a view to passing the night there, and since at that period there was no castle in the place worthy of entertaining the queen with her husband and numerous court, the convent of St. Peter's at Majella was converted into a royal residence: this convent had been built by Charles II in the year of our Lord 1309.

While the grand seneschal was giving orders for supper and the preparation of a room for André and his wife, the prince, who during the whole day had abandoned himself entirely to his favourite amusement, went up on the terrace to enjoy the evening air, accompanied by the good Isolda, his beloved nurse, who loved him more even than his mother, and would not leave his side for a moment. Never had the prince appeared so animated and happy: he was in ecstasies over the beauty of the country, the clear air, the scent of the trees

around; he besieged his nurse with a thousand queries, never waiting for an answer; and they were indeed long in coming, for poor Isolda was gazing upon him with that appearance of fascination which makes a mother absent-minded when her child is talking. André was eagerly telling her about a terrible boar he had chased that morning across the woods, how it had lain foaming at his feet, and Isolda interrupted him to say he had a grain of dust in his eye. Then André was full of his plans for the future, and Isolda stroked his fair hair, remarking that he must be feeling very tired. Then, heeding nothing but his own joy and excitement, the young prince hurled defiance at destiny, calling by all his gods on dangers to come forward, so that he might have the chance of quelling them, and the poor nurse exclaimed, in a flood of tears, "My child, you love me no longer."

Out of all patience with these constant interruptions, André scolded her kindly enough, and mocked at her childish fears. Then, paying no attention to a sort of melancholy that was coming over him, he bade her tell him old tales of his childhood, and had a long talk about his brother Louis, his absent mother, and tears were in his eyes when he recalled her last farewell. Isolda listened joyfully, and answered all he asked; but no fell presentiment shook her heart: the poor woman loved André with all the strength of her soul; for him she would have given up her life in this world and in the world to come; yet she was not his mother.

When all was ready, Robert of Cabane came to tell the prince that the queen awaited him; André cast one last look at the smiling fields beneath the starry heavens, pressed his nurse's hand to his lips and to his heart, and followed the grand seneschal slowly and, it seemed, with some regret. But soon the brilliant lights of the room, the wine that circulated freely, the gay talk, the eager recitals of that day's exploits, served to disperse the cloud of gloom that had for a moment overspread the countenance of the prince. The queen alone, leaning on the table, with fixed eyes and lips that never moved,

sat at this strange feast pale and cold as a baleful ghost summoned from the tomb to disturb the joy of the party. André, whose brain began to be affected by the draughts of wine from Capri and Syracuse, was annoyed at his wife's look, and attributing it to contempt, filled a goblet to the brim and presented it to the queen. Joan visibly trembled, her lips moved convulsively; but the conspirators drowned in their noisy talk the involuntary groan that escaped her. In the midst of a general uproar, Robert of Cabane proposed that they should serve generous supplies of the same wine drunk at the royal table to the Hungarian guards who were keeping watch at the approaches to the convent, and this liberality evoked frenzied applause. The shouting of the soldiers soon gave witness to their gratitude for the unexpected gift, and mingled with the hilarious toasts of the banqueters. To put the finishing touch to André's excitement, there were cries on every side of "Long live the Queen! Long live His Majesty the King of Naples!"

The orgy lasted far into the night: the pleasures of the next day were discussed with enthusiasm, and Bertrand of Artois protested in a loud voice that if they were so late now some would not rise early on the morrow. André declared that, for his part, an hour or two's rest would be enough to get over his fatigue, and he eagerly protested that it would be well for others to follow his example. The Count of Terlizzi seemed to express some doubt as to the prince's punctuality. André insisted, and challenging all the barons present to see who would be up first, he retired with the queen to the room that had been reserved for them, where he very soon fell into a deep and heavy sleep. About two o'clock in the morning, Tommaso Pace, the prince's valet and first usher of the royal apartments, knocked at his master's door to rouse him for the chase. At the first knock, all was silence; at the second, Joan, who had not closed her eyes all night, moved as if to rouse her husband and warn him of the threatened danger; but at the third knock the unfortunate young man suddenly awoke, and hearing in the next room sounds of laughter and whispering,

fancied that they were making a joke of his laziness, and jumped out of bed bareheaded, in nothing but his shirt, his shoes half on and half off. He opened the door; and at this point we translate literally the account of Domenico Gravina, a historian of much esteem. As soon as the prince appeared, the conspirators all at once fell upon him, to strangle him with their hands; believing he could not die by poison or sword, because of the charmed ring given him by his poor mother. But André was so strong and active, that when he perceived the infamous treason he defended himself with more than human strength, and with dreadful cries got free from his murderers, his face all bloody, his fair hair pulled out in handfuls. The unhappy young man tried to gain his own bedroom, so as to get some weapon and valiantly resist the assassins; but as he reached the door, Nicholas of Melazzo, putting his dagger like a bolt into the lock, stopped his entrance. The prince, calling aloud the whole time and imploring the protection of his friends, returned to the hall; but all the doors were shut, and no one held out a helping hand; for the queen was silent, showing no uneasiness about her husband's death.

But the nurse Isolda, terrified by the shouting of her beloved son and lord, leapt from her bed and went to the window, filling the house with dreadful cries. The traitors, alarmed by the mighty uproar, although the place was lonely and so far from the centre of the town that nobody could have come to see what the noise was, were on the point of letting their victim go, when Bertrand of Artois, who felt he was more guilty than the others, seized the prince with hellish fury round the waist, and after a desperate struggle got him down; then dragging him by the hair of his head to a balcony which gave upon the garden, and pressing one knee upon his chest, cried out to the others—

"Come here, barons: I have what we want to strangle him with."

And round his neck he passed a long cord of silk and gold, while the wretched man struggled all he could. Bertrand

quickly drew up the knot, and the others threw the body over the parapet of the balcony, leaving it hanging between earth and sky until death ensued. When the Count of Terlizzi averted his eyes from the horrid spectacle, Robert of Cabane cried out imperiously—

"What are you doing there? The cord is long enough for us all to hold: we want not witnesses, we want accomplices!"

As soon as the last convulsive movements of the dying man had ceased, they let the corpse drop the whole height of the three storeys, and opening the doors of the hall, departed as though nothing had happened.

Isolda, when at last she contrived to get a light, rapidly ran to the queen's chamber, and finding the door shut on the inside, began to call loudly on her André. There was no answer, though the queen was in the room. The poor nurse, distracted, trembling, desperate, ran down all the corridors, knocked at all the cells and woke the monks one by one, begging them to help her look for the prince. The monks said that they had indeed heard a noise, but thinking it was a quarrel between soldiers drunken perhaps or mutinous, they had not thought it their business to interfere. Isolda eagerly entreated: the alarm spread through the convent; the monks followed the nurse, who went on before with a torch. She entered the garden, saw something white upon the grass, advanced trembling, gave one piercing cry, and fell backward.

The wretched André was lying in his blood, a cord round his neck as though he were a thief, his head crushed in by the height from which he fell. Then two monks went upstairs to the queen's room, and respectfully knocking at the door, asked in sepulchral tones—

"Madam, what would you have us do with your husband's corpse?"

And when the queen made no answer, they went down again slowly to the garden, and kneeling one at the head, the other at the foot of the dead man, they began to recite peni-

tential psalms in a low voice. When they had spent an hour in prayer, two other monks went up in the same way to Joan's chamber, repeating the same question and getting no answer, whereupon they relieved the first two, and began themselves to pray. Next a third couple went to the door of this inexorable room, and coming away perturbed by their want of success, perceived that there was a disturbance of people outside the convent, while vengeful cries were heard amongst the indignant crowd. The groups became more and more thronged, threatening voices were raised, a torrent of invaders threatened the royal dwelling, when the queen's guard appeared, lance in readiness, and a litter closely shut, surrounded by the principal barons of the court, passed through the crowd, which stood stupidly gazing. Joan, wrapped in a black veil, went back to Castel Nuovo, amid her escort; and nobody, say the historians, had the courage to say a word about this terrible deed.

CHAPTER V

THE terrible part that Charles of Durazzo was to play began as soon as this crime was accomplished. The duke left the corpse two whole days exposed to the wind and the rain, unburied and dishonoured, the corpse of a man whom the pope had made King of Sicily and Jerusalem, so that the indignation of the mob might be increased by the dreadful sight. On the third he ordered it to be conveyed with the utmost pomp to the cathedral at Naples, and assembling all the Hungarians around the catafalque, he thus addressed them, in a voice of thunder:—

"Nobles and commoners, behold our king hanged like a dog by infamous traitors. God will soon make known to us the names of all the guilty: let those who desire that justice may be done hold up their hands and swear against the murderers bloody persecution, implacable hatred, everlasting vengeance!"

It was this one man's cry that brought death and desolation to the murderers' hearts, and the people dispersed about the town, shrieking, "Vengeance, vengeance!"

Divine justice, which knows naught of privilege and respects no crown, struck Joan first of all in her love. When the two lovers first met, both were seized alike with terror and disgust; they recoiled trembling, the queen seeing in Bertrand her husband's executioner, and he in her the cause of his crime, possibly of his speedy punishment. Bertrand's looks were disordered, his cheeks hollow, his eyes encircled with black rings, his mouth horribly distorted; his arm and forefinger extended towards his accomplice, he seemed to behold a frightful vision rising before him. The same cord he had

used when he strangled André, he now saw round the queen's neck, so tight that it made its way into her flesh: an invisible force, a Satanic impulse, urged him to strangle with his own hands the woman he had loved so dearly, had at one time adored on his knees. The count rushed out of the room with the gestures of desperation, muttering incoherent words; and as he shewed plain signs of mental aberration, his father, Charles of Artois, took him away, and they went that same evening to their palace of St. Agatha, and there prepared a defence in case they should be attacked.

But Joan's punishment, which was destined to be slow as well as dreadful, to last thirty-seven years and end in a ghastly death, was now only beginning. All the wretched beings who were stained with André's death came in turn to her to demand the price of blood. The Catanese and her son, who held in their hands not only the queen's honour but her life, now became doubly greedy and exacting. Doña Cancha no longer put any bridle on her licentiousness; and the Empress of Constantinople ordered her niece to marry her eldest son, Robert, Prince of Tarentum. Joan, consumed by remorse, full of indignation and shame at the arrogant conduct of her subjects, dared scarcely lift her head, and stooped to entreaties, only stipulating for a few days' delay before giving her answer: the empress consented, on condition that her son should come to reside at Castel Nuovo, with permission to see the queen once a day. Joan bowed her head in silence, and Robert of Tarentum was installed at the castle.

Charles of Durazzo, who by the death of André had practically become the head of the family, and would, by the terms of his grandfather's will, inherit the kingdom by right of his wife Marie in the case of Joan's dying without lawful issue, sent to the queen two commands: first, that she should not dream of contracting a new marriage without first consulting him in the choice of a husband; secondly, that she should invest him at once with the title of Duke of Calabria. To compel his cousin to make these two concessions, he added that if she should be so ill advised as to refuse either of them, he should

hand over to justice the proofs of the crime and the names of the murderers. Joan, bending beneath the weight of this new difficulty, could think of no way to avoid it; but Catherine, who alone was stout enough to fight this nephew of hers, insisted that they must strike at the Duke of Durazzo in his ambition and hopes, and tell him, to begin with—what was the fact—that the queen was pregnant. If, in spite of this news, he persisted in his plans, she would find some means or other, she said, of causing trouble and discord in her nephew's family, and wounding him in his most intimate affections or closest interests, by publicly dishonouring him through his wife or his mother.

Charles smiled coldly when his aunt came to tell him from the queen that she was about to bring into the world an infant, André's posthumous child. What importance could a babe yet unborn possibly have—as a fact, it lived only a few months—in the eyes of a man who with such admirable coolness got rid of people who stood in his way, and that moreover by the hand of his own enemies? He told the empress that the happy news she had condescended to bring him in person, far from diminishing his kindness towards his cousin, inspired him rather with more interest and goodwill; that consequently he reiterated his suggestion, and renewed his promise not to seek vengeance for his dear André, since in a certain sense the crime was not complete should a child be destined to survive; but in case of a refusal he declared himself inexorable. He cleverly gave Catherine to understand that, as she had some interest herself in the prince's death, she ought for her own sake to persuade the queen to stop legal proceedings.

The empress seemed to be deeply impressed by her nephew's threatening attitude, and promised to do her best to persuade the queen to grant all he asked, on condition, however, that Charles should allow the necessary time for carrying through so delicate a business. But Catherine profited by this delay to think out her own plan of revenge, and ensure the means of certain success. After starting several projects eagerly and then regretfully abandoning them, she fixed upon an infernal and

unheard-of scheme, which the mind would refuse to believe but for the unanimous testimony of historians. Poor Agnes of Duras, Charles's mother, had for some few days been suffering with an inexplicable weariness, a slow painful malady with which her son's restlessness and violence may have had not a little to do. The empress resolved that the first effect of her hatred was to fall upon this unhappy mother. She summoned the Count of Terlizzi and Doña Cancha, his mistress, who by the queen's orders had been attending Agnes since her illness began. Catherine suggested to the young chamberwoman, who was at that time with child, that she should deceive the doctor by representing that certain signs of her own condition really belonged to the sick woman, so that he, deceived by the false indications, should be compelled to admit to Charles of Durazzo that his mother was guilty and dishonoured. The Count of Terlizzi, who ever since he had taken part in the regicide trembled in fear of discovery, had nothing to oppose to the empress's desire, and Doña Cancha, whose head was as light as her heart was corrupt, seized with a foolish gaiety on any chance of taking her revenge on the prudery of the only princess of the blood who led a pure life at a court that was renowned for its depravity. Once assured that her accomplices would be prudent and obedient, Catherine began to spread abroad certain vague and dubious but terribly serious rumours, only needing proof, and soon after the cruel accusation was started it was repeated again and again in confidence, until it reached the ears of Charles.

At this amazing revelation the duke was seized with a fit of trembling. He sent instantly for the doctor, and asked imperiously what was the cause of his mother's malady. The doctor turned pale and stammered; but when Charles grew threatening he admitted that he had certain grounds for suspecting that the duchess was *enceinte*, but as he might easily have been deceived the first time, he would make a second investigation before pronouncing his opinion in so serious a matter. The next day, as the doctor came out of the bedroom, the duke met him, and interrogating him with an agonised

gesture, could only judge by the silence that his fears were too well confirmed. But the doctor, with excess of caution, declared that he would make a third trial. Condemned criminals can suffer no worse than Charles in the long hours that passed before that fatal moment when he learned that his mother was indeed guilty. On the third day the doctor stated on his soul and conscience that Agnes of Durazzo was pregnant.

"Very good," said Charles, dismissing the doctor with no sign of emotion.

That evening the duchess took a medicine ordered by the doctor; and when, half an hour later, she was assailed with violent pains, the duke was warned that perhaps other physicians ought to be consulted, as the prescription of the ordinary doctor, instead of bringing about an improvement in her state, had only made her worse.

Charles slowly went up to the duchess's room, and sending away all the people who were standing round her bed, on the pretext that they were clumsy and made his mother worse, he shut the door, and they were alone. The poor Agnes, forgetting her internal agony when she saw her son, pressed his hand tenderly and smiled through her tears.

Charles, pale beneath his bronzed complexion, his forehead moist with a cold sweat, and his eyes horribly dilated, bent over the sick woman and asked her gloomily—

"Are you a little better, mother?"

"Ah, I am in pain, in frightful pain, my poor Charles. I feel as though I have molten lead in my veins. O my son, call your brothers, so that I may give you all my blessing for the last time, for I cannot hold out long against this pain. I am burning. Mercy! Call a doctor: I know I have been poisoned."

Charles did not stir from the bedside.

"Water!" cried the dying woman in a broken voice,—"water! A doctor, a confessor! My children—I want my children!"

And as the duke paid no heed, but stood moodily silent, the poor mother, prostrated by pain, fancied that grief had robbed her son of all power of speech or movement, and so, by a

desperate effort, sat up, and seizing him by the arm, cried with all the strength she could muster—

"Charles, my son, what is it? My poor boy, courage; it is nothing, I hope. But quick, call for help, call a doctor. Ah, you have no idea of what I suffer."

"Your doctor," said Charles slowly and coldly, each word piercing his mother's heart like a dagger,—"your doctor cannot come."

"Oh, why?" asked Agnes, stupefied.

"Because no one ought to live who knows the secret of our shame."

"Unhappy man!" she cried, overwhelmed with pain and terror, "you have murdered him! Perhaps you have poisoned your mother too! Charles, Charles, have mercy on your own soul!"

"It is your doing," said Charles, without show of emotion: "you have driven me into crime and despair; you have caused my dishonour in this world and my damnation in the next."

"What are you saying? My own Charles, have mercy! Do not let me die in this horrible uncertainty; what fatal delusion is blinding you? Speak, my son, speak: I am not feeling the poison now. What have I done? Of what have I been accused?"

She looked with haggard eyes at her son: her maternal love still struggled against the awful thought of matricide; at last, seeing that Charles remained speechless in spite of her entreaties, she repeated, with a piercing cry—

"Speak, in God's name, speak before I die!"

"Mother, you are with child."

"What!" cried Agnes, with a loud cry, which broke her very heart. "O God, forgive him! Charles, your mother forgives and blesses you in death."

Charles fell upon her neck, desperately crying for help: he would now have gladly saved her at the cost of his life, but it was too late. He uttered one cry that came from his heart, and was found stretched out upon his mother's corpse.

Strange comments were made at the court on the death of

the Duchess of Durazzo and her doctor's disappearance; but there was no doubt at all that grief and gloom were furrowing wrinkles on Charles's brow, which was already sad enough. Catherine alone knew the terrible cause of her nephew's depression, for to her it was very plain that the duke at one blow had killed his mother and her physician. But she had never expected a reaction so sudden and violent in a man who shrank before no crime. She had thought Charles capable of everything except remorse. His gloomy, self-absorbed silence seemed a bad augury for her plans. She had desired to cause trouble for him in his own family, so that he might have no time to oppose the marriage of her son with the queen; but she had shot beyond her mark, and Charles, started thus on the terrible path of crime, had now broken through the bonds of his holiest affections, and gave himself up to his bad passions with feverish ardour and a savage desire for revenge. Then Catherine had recourse to gentleness and submission. She gave her son to understand that there was only one way of obtaining the queen's hand, and that was by flattering the ambition of Charles and in some sort submitting himself to his patronage. Robert of Tarentum understood this, and ceased making court to Joan, who received his devotion with cool kindness, and attached himself closely to Charles, paying him much the same sort of respect and deference that he himself had affected for André, when the thought was first in his mind of causing his ruin. But the Duke of Durazzo was by no means deceived as to the devoted friendship shown towards him by the heir of the house of Tarentum, and pretending to be deeply touched by the unexpected change of feeling, he all the time kept a strict guard on Robert's actions.

An event outside all human foresight occurred to upset the calculations of the two cousins. One day while they were out together on horseback, as they often were since their pretended reconciliation, Louis of Tarentum, Robert's youngest brother, who had always felt for Joan a chivalrous, innocent love,—a love which a young man of twenty is apt to lock up in his heart as a secret treasure,—Louis, we say, who had held aloof

from the infamous family conspiracy and had not soiled his hands with André's blood, drawn on by an irrepressible passion, all at once appeared at the gates of Castel Nuovo; and while his brother was wasting precious hours in asking for a promise of marriage, had the bridge raised and gave the soldiers strict orders to admit no one. Then, never troubling himself about Charles's anger or Robert's jealousy, he hurried to the queen's room, and there, says Domenico Gravina, without any preamble, the union was consummated.

On returning from his ride, Robert, astonished that the bridge was not at once lowered for him, at first loudly called upon the soldiers on guard at the fortress, threatening severe punishment for their unpardonable negligence; but as the gates did not open and the soldiers made no sign of fear or regret, he fell into a violent fit of rage, and swore he would hang the wretches like dogs for hindering his return home. But the Empress of Constantinople, terrified at the bloody quarrel beginning between the two brothers, went alone and on foot to her son, and making use of her maternal authority to beg him to master his feelings, there in the presence of the crowd that had come up hastily to witness the strange scene, she related in a low voice all that had passed in his absence.

A roar as of a wounded tiger escaped from Robert's breast: all but blind with rage, he nearly trampled his mother under the feet of his horse, which seemed to feel his master's anger, and plunging violently, breathed blood from his nostrils. When the prince had poured every possible execration on his brother's head, he turned and galloped away from the accursed castle, flying to the Duke of Durazzo, whom he had only just left, to tell him of this outrage and stir him to revenge. Charles was talking carelessly with his young wife, who was but little used to such tranquil conversation and expansiveness, when the Prince of Tarentum, exhausted, out of breath, bathed in perspiration, came up with his incredible tale. Charles made him say it twice over, so impossible did Louis's audacious enterprise appear to him. Then quickly changing from doubt to fury, he struck his brow with his iron glove, saying that as the

queen defied him he would make her tremble even in her castle and in her lover's arms. He threw one withering look on Marie, who interceded tearfully for her sister, and pressing Robert's hand with warmth, vowed that so long as he lived Louis should never be Joan's husband.

That same evening he shut himself up in his study, and wrote letters whose effect soon appeared. A bull, dated June 2, 1346, was addressed to Bertram de Baux, chief-justice of the kingdom of Sicily and Count of Monte Scaglioso, with orders to make the most strict inquiries concerning André's murderers, whom the pope likewise laid under his anathema, and to punish them with the utmost rigour of the law. But a secret note was appended to the bull which was quite at variance with the designs of Charles: the sovereign pontiff expressly bade the chief-justice not to implicate the queen in the proceedings or the princes of the blood, so as to avoid worse disturbances, reserving, as supreme head of the Church and lord of the kingdom, the right of judging them later on, as his wisdom might dictate.

For this imposing trial Bertram de Baux made great preparations. A platform was erected in the great hall of tribunal, and all the officers of the crown and great state dignitaries, and all the chief barons, had a place behind the enclosure where the magistrates sat. Three days after Clement VI's bull had been published in the capital, the chief-justice was ready for a public examination of two accused persons. The two culprits who had first fallen into the hands of justice were, as one may easily suppose, those whose condition was least exalted, whose lives were least valuable, Tommaso Pace and Nicholas of Melazzo. They were led before the tribunal to be first of all tortured, as the custom was. As they approached the judges, the notary passing by Charles in the street had time to say in a low voice—

"My lord, the time has come to give my life for you: I will do my duty; I commend my wife and children to you."

Encouraged by a nod from his patron, he walked on firmly and deliberately. The chief-justice, after establishing the

identity of the accused, gave them over to the executioner and his men to be tortured in the public square, so that their sufferings might serve as a show and an example to the crowd. But no sooner was Tommaso Pace tied to the rope, when to the great disappointment of all he declared that he would confess everything, and asked accordingly to be taken back before his judges. At these words, the Count of Terlizzi, who was following every movement of the two men with mortal anxiety, thought it was all over now with him and his accomplices; and so, when Tommaso Pace was turning his steps towards the great hall, led by two guards, his hands tied behind his back, and followed by the notary, he contrived to take him into a secluded house, and squeezing his throat with great force, made him thus put his tongue out, whereupon he cut it off with a sharp razor.

The yells of the poor wretch so cruelly mutilated fell on the ears of the Duke of Durazzo: he found his way into the room where the barbarous act had been committed just as the Count of Terlizzi was coming out, and approached the notary, who had been present at the dreadful spectacle and had not given the least sign of fear or emotion. Master Nicholas, thinking the same fate was in store for him, turned calmly to the duke, saying with a sad smile—

"My lord, the precaution is useless; there is no need for you to cut out my tongue, as the noble count has done to my poor companion. The last scrap of my flesh may be torn off without one word being dragged from my mouth. I have promised, my lord, and you have the life of my wife and the future of my children as guarantee for my word."

"I do not ask for silence," said the duke solemnly; "you can free me from all my enemies at once, and I order you to denounce them at the tribunal."

The notary bowed his head with mournful resignation; then raising it in affright, made one step up to the duke and murmured in a choking voice—

"And the queen?"

"No one would believe you if you ventured to denounce

her; but when the Catanese and her son, the Count of Terlizzi and his wife and her most intimate friends, have been accused by you, when they fail to endure the torture, and when they denounce her unanimously——"

"I see, my lord. You do not only want my life; you would have my soul too. Very well; once more I commend to you my children."

With a deep sigh he walked up to the tribunal. The chief-justice asked Tommaso Pace the usual questions, and a shudder of horror passed through the assembly when they saw the poor wretch in desperation opening his mouth, which streamed with blood. But surprise and terror reached their height when Nicholas of Melazzo slowly and firmly gave a list of André's murderers, all except the queen and the princes of the blood, and went on to give all details of the assassination.

Proceedings were at once taken for the arrest of the grand seneschal, Robert of Cabane, and the Counts of Terlizzi and Morcone, who were present and had not ventured to make any movement in self-defence. An hour later, Philippa, her two daughters, and Doña Cancha joined them in prison, after vainly imploring the queen's protection. Charles and Bertrand of Artois, shut up in their fortress of Saint Agatha, bade defiance to justice, and several others, among them the Counts of Meleto and Catanzaro, escaped by flight.

As soon as Master Nicholas said he had nothing further to confess, and that he had spoken the whole truth and nothing but the truth, the chief-justice pronounced sentence amid a profound silence; and without delay Tommaso Pace and the notary were tied to the tails of two horses, dragged through the chief streets of the town, and hanged in the market-place.

The other prisoners were thrown into a subterranean vault, to be questioned and put to the torture on the following day. In the evening, finding themselves in the same dungeon, they reproached one another, each pretending he had been dragged into the crime by someone else. Then Doña Cancha, whose strange character knew no inconsistencies, even face to face

with death and torture, drowned with a great burst of laughter the lamentations of her companions, and joyously exclaimed—

"Look here, friends, why these bitter recriminations—this ill-mannered raving? We have no excuses to make, and we are all equally guilty. I am the youngest of all, and not the ugliest,—by your leave, ladies,—but if I am condemned, at least I will die cheerfully. For I have never denied myself any pleasure I could get in this world, and I can boast that much will be forgiven me, for I have loved much: of that you, gentlemen, know something. You, bad old man," she continued to the Count of Terlizzi, "do you not remember lying by my side in the queen's ante-chamber? Come, no blushes before your noble family; confess, my lord, that I am with child by your Excellency; and you know how we managed to make up the story of poor Agnes of Durazzo and her pregnancy—God rest her soul! For my part, I never supposed the joke would take such a serious turn all at once. You know all this and much more; spare your lamentations, for, by my word, they are getting very tiresome: let us prepare to die joyously, as we have lived."

With these words she yawned slightly, and, lying down on the straw, fell into a deep sleep, and dreamed as happy dreams as she had ever dreamed in her life.

On the morrow from break of day there was an immense crowd on the sea front. During the night an enormous palisade had been put up to keep the people away far enough for them to see the accused without hearing anything. Charles of Durazzo, at the head of a brilliant cortège of knights and pages, mounted on a magnificent horse, all in black, as a sign of mourning, waited near the enclosure. Ferocious joy shone in his eyes as the accused made their way through the crowd, two by two, their wrists tied with ropes; for the duke every minute expected to hear the queen's name spoken. But the chief-justice, a man of experience, had prevented indiscretion of any kind by fixing a hook in the tongue of each one. The poor creatures were tortured on a ship, so that nobody should hear the terrible confessions their sufferings dragged from them.

But Joan, in spite of the wrongs that most of the conspirators had done her, felt a renewal of pity for the woman she had once respected as a mother, for her childish companions and her friends, and possibly also some remains of love for Robert of Cabane, and sent two messengers to beg Bertram de Baux to show mercy to the culprits. But the chief-justice seized these men and had them tortured; and on their confession that they also were implicated in André's murder, he condemned them to the same punishment as the others. Doña Cancha alone, by reason of her situation, escaped the torture, and her sentence was deferred till the day of her confinement.

As this beautiful girl was returning to prison, with many a smile for all the handsomest cavaliers she could see in the crowd, she gave a sign to Charles of Durazzo as she neared him to come forward, and since her tongue had not been pierced (for the same reason) with an iron instrument, she said some words to him a while in a low voice.

Charles turned fearfully pale, and putting his hand to his sword, cried—

"Wretched woman!"

"You forget, my lord, I am under the protection of the law."

"My mother!—oh, my poor mother!" murmured Charles in a choked voice, and he fell backward.

The next morning the people were beforehand with the executioner, loudly demanding their prey. All the national troops and mercenaries that the judicial authorities could command were echelonned in the streets, opposing a sort of dam to the torrent of the raging crowd. The sudden insatiable cruelty that too often degrades human nature had awaked in the populace: all heads were turned with hatred and frenzy; all imaginations inflamed with the passion for revenge; groups of men and women, roaring like wild beasts, threatened to knock down the walls of the prison, if the condemned were not handed over to them to take to the place of punishment: a great murmur arose, continuous, ever the same, like the growling of thunder: the queen's heart was petrified with terror.

But, in spite of the desire of Bertram de Baux to satisfy the

popular wish, the preparations for the solemn execution were not completed till midday, when the sun's rays fell scorchingly upon the town. There went up a mighty cry from ten thousand palpitating breasts when a report first ran through the crowd that the prisoners were about to appear. There was a moment of silence, and the prison doors rolled slowly back on their hinges with a rusty, grating noise. A triple row of horsemen, with lowered visor and lance in rest, started the procession, and amid yells and curses the condemned prisoners came out one by one, each tied upon a cart, gagged and naked to the waist, in charge of two executioners, whose orders were to torture them the whole length of their way. On the first cart was the former laundress of Catana, afterwards wife of the grand seneschal and governess to the queen, Philippa of Cabane: the two executioners at right and left of her scourged her with such fury that the blood spurting up from the wounds left a long track in all the streets passed by the cortège.

Immediately following their mother on separate carts came the Countesses of Terlizzi and Morcone, the elder no more than eighteen years of age. The two sisters were so marvellously beautiful that in the crowd a murmur of surprise was heard, and greedy eyes were fixed upon their naked trembling shoulders. But the men charged to torture them gazed with ferocious smiles upon their forms of seductive beauty, and, armed with sharp knives, cut off pieces of their flesh with a deliberate enjoyment and threw them out to the crowd, who eagerly struggled to get them, signing to the executioners to show which part of the victims' bodies they preferred.

Robert of Cabane, the grand seneschal, the Counts of Terlizzi and Morcone, Raymond Pace, brother of the old valet who had been executed the day before, and many more, were dragged on similar carts, and both scourged with ropes and slashed with knives; their flesh was torn out with red-hot pincers, and flung upon brazen chafing-dishes. No cry of pain was heard from the grand seneschal, he never stirred once in his frightful agony; yet the torturers put such fury into their work that the poor wretch was dead before the goal was reached.

In the centre of the square of Saint Eligius an immense stake was set up: there the prisoners were taken, and what was left of their mutilated bodies was thrown into the flames. The Count of Terlizzi and the grand seneschal's widow were still alive, and two tears of blood ran down the cheeks of the miserable mother as she saw her son's corpse and the palpitating remains of her two daughters cast upon the fire—they by their stifled cries showed that they had not ceased to suffer. But suddenly a fearful noise overpowered the groans of the victims; the enclosure was broken and overturned by the mob. Like madmen, they rushed at the burning pile, armed with sabres, axes, and knives, and snatching the bodies dead or alive from the flames, tore them to pieces, carrying off the bones to make whistles or handles for their daggers as a souvenir of this horrible day.

CHAPTER VI

THE spectacle of this frightful punishment did not satisfy the revenge of Charles of Durazzo. Seconded by the chief-justice, he daily brought about fresh executions, till André's death came to be no more than a pretext for the legal murder of all who opposed his projects. But Louis of Tarentum, who had won Joan's heart, and was eagerly trying to get the necessary dispensation for legalising the marriage, from this time forward took as a personal insult every act of the high court of justice which was performed against his will and against the queen's prerogative: he armed all his adherents, increasing their number by all the adventurers he could get together, and so put on foot a strong enough force to support his own party and resist his cousin. Naples was thus split up into hostile camps, ready to come to blows on the smallest pretext, whose daily skirmishes, moreover, were always followed by some scene of pillage or death.

But Louis had need of money both to pay his mercenaries and to hold his own against the Duke of Durazzo and his own brother Robert, and one day he discovered that the queen's coffers were empty. Joan was wretched and desperate, and her lover, though generous and brave and anxious to reassure her so far as he could, did not very clearly see how to extricate himself from such a difficult situation. But his mother Catherine, whose ambition was satisfied in seeing one of her sons, no matter which, attain to the throne of Naples, came unexpectedly to their aid, promising solemnly that it would only take her a few days to be able to lay at her niece's feet a treasure richer than anything she had ever dreamed of, queen as she was.

The empress then took half her son's troops, made for Saint Agatha, and besieged the fortress where Charles and Bertrand of Artois had taken refuge when they fled from justice. The old count, astonished at the sight of this woman, who had been the very soul of the conspiracy, and not in the least understanding her arrival as an enemy, sent out to ask the intention of this display of military force. To which Catherine replied in words which we translate literally:—

"My friends, tell Charles, our faithful friend, that we desire to speak with him privately and alone concerning a matter equally interesting to us both, and he is not to be alarmed at our arriving in the guise of an enemy, for this we have done designedly, as we shall explain in the course of our interview. We know he is confined to bed by the gout, and therefore feel no surprise at his not coming out to meet us. Have the goodness to salute him on our part and reassure him, telling him that we desire to come in, if such is his good pleasure, with our intimate counsellor, Nicholas Acciajuoli, and ten soldiers only, to speak with him concerning an important matter that cannot be entrusted to go-betweens."

Entirely reassured by these frank, friendly explanations, Charles of Artois sent out his son Bertrand to the empress to receive her with the respect due to her rank and high position at the court of Naples. Catherine went promptly to the castle with many signs of joy, and inquiring after the count's health and expressing her affection, as soon as they were alone, she mysteriously lowered her voice and explained that the object of her visit was to consult a man of tried experience on the affairs of Naples, and to beg his active co-operation in the queen's favour. As, however, she was not pressed for time, she could wait at Saint Agatha for the count's recovery to hear his views and tell him of the march of events since he left the court. She succeeded so well in gaining the old man's confidence and banishing his suspicions, that he begged her to honour them with her presence as long as she was able, and little by little received all her men within the walls. This was what Catherine was waiting for: on the very day when her

army was installed at Saint Agatha, she suddenly entered the count's room, followed by four soldiers, and seizing the old man by the throat, exclaimed wrathfully—

"Miserable traitor, you will not escape from our hands before you have received the punishment you deserve. In the meanwhile, show me where your treasure is hidden, if you would not have me throw your body out to feed the crows that are swooping around these dungeons."

The count, half choking, the dagger at his breast, did not even attempt to call for help; he fell on his knees, begging the empress to save at least the life of his son, who was not yet well from the terrible attack of melancholia that had shaken his reason ever since the catastrophe. Then he painfully dragged himself to the place where he had hidden his treasure, and pointing with his finger, cried—

"Take all; take my life; but spare my son."

Catherine could not contain herself for joy when she saw spread out at her feet exquisite and incredibly valuable cups, caskets of pearls, diamonds and rubies of marvellous value, coffers full of gold ingots, and all the wonders of Asia that surpass the wildest imagination. But when the old man, trembling, begged for the liberty of his son as the price of his fortune and his own life, the empress resumed her cold, pitiless manner, and harshly replied—

"I have already given orders for your son to be brought here; but prepare for an eternal farewell, for he is to be taken to the fortress of Melfi, and you in all probability will end your days beneath the castle of Saint Agatha."

The grief of the poor count at this violent separation was so great, that a few days later he was found dead in his dungeon, his lips covered with a bloody froth, his hands gnawed in despair. Bertrand did not long survive him. He actually lost his reason when he heard of his father's death, and hanged himself on the prison grating. Thus did the murderers of André destroy one another, like venomous animals shut up in the same cage.

Catherine of Tarentum, carrying off the treasure she had so

gained, arrived at the court of Naples, proud of her triumph and contemplating vast schemes. But new troubles had come about in her absence. Charles of Durazzo, for the last time desiring the queen to give him the duchy of Calabria, a title which had always belonged to the heir presumptive, and angered by her refusal, had written to Louis of Hungary, inviting him to take possession of the kingdom, and promising to help in the enterprise with all his own forces, and to give up the principal authors of his brother's death, who till now had escaped justice.

The King of Hungary eagerly accepted these offers, and got ready an army to avenge André's death and proceed to the conquest of Naples. The tears of his mother Elizabeth and the advice of Friar Robert, the old minister, who had fled to Buda, confirmed him in his projects of vengeance. He had already lodged a bitter complaint at the court of Avignon that, while the inferior assassins had been punished, she who was above all others guilty had been shamefully let off scot free, and though still stained with her husband's blood, continued to live a life of debauchery and adultery. The pope replied soothingly that, so far as it depended upon him, he would not be found slow to give satisfaction to a lawful grievance; but the accusation ought to be properly formulated and supported by proof; that no doubt Joan's conduct during and after her husband's death was blamable; but His Majesty must consider that the Church of Rome, which before all things seeks truth and justice, always proceeds with the utmost circumspection, and in so grave a matter more especially must not judge by appearances only.

Joan, frightened by the preparations for war, sent ambassadors to the Florentine Republic, to assert her innocence of the crime imputed to her by public opinion, and did not hesitate to send excuses even to the Hungarian court; but André's brother replied in a letter laconic and threatening:—

"Your former disorderly life, the arrogation to yourself of exclusive power, your neglect to punish your husband's murderers, your marriage to another husband, moreover your

own excuses, are all sufficient proofs that you were an accomplice in the murder."

Catherine would not be put out of heart by the King of Hungary's threats, and looking at the position of the queen and her son with a coolness that was never deceived, she was convinced that there was no other means of safety except a reconciliation with Charles, their mortal foe, which could only be brought about by giving him all he wanted. It was one of two things: either he would help them to repulse the King of Hungary, and later on they would pay the cost when the dangers were less pressing, or he would be beaten himself, and thus they would at least have the pleasure of drawing him down with them in their own destruction.

The agreement was made in the gardens of Castel Nuovo, whither Charles had repaired on the invitation of the queen and her aunt. To her cousin of Durazzo Joan accorded the title so much desired of Duke of Calabria, and Charles, feeling that he was hereby made heir to the kingdom, marched at once on Aquila, which town already was flying the Hungarian colours. The wretched man did not foresee that he was going straight to his destruction.

When the Empress of Constantinople saw this man, whom she hated above all others, depart in joy, she looked contemptuously upon him, divining by a woman's instinct that mischief would befall him; then, having no further mischief to do, no further treachery on earth, no further revenge to satisfy, she all at once succumbed to some unknown malady, and died suddenly, without uttering a cry or exciting a single regret.

But the King of Hungary, who had crossed Italy with a formidable army, now entered the kingdom from the side of Aquila: on his way he had everywhere received marks of interest and sympathy; and Alberto and Mertino della Scala, lords of Verona, had given him three hundred horse to prove that all their goodwill was with him in his enterprise. The news of the arrival of the Hungarians threw the court into a state of confusion impossible to describe. They had hoped that the king would be stopped by the pope's legate, who had come to

Foligno to forbid him, in the name of the Holy Father, and on pain of excommunication to proceed any further without his consent; but Louis of Hungary replied to the pope's legate that, once master of Naples, he should consider himself a feudatory of the Church, but till then he had no obligations except to God and his own conscience. Thus the avenging army fell like a thunderbolt upon the heart of the kingdom, before there was any thought of taking serious measures for defence. There was only one plan possible: the queen assembled the barons who were most strongly attached to her, made them swear homage and fidelity to Louis of Tarentum, whom she presented to them as her husband, and then leaving with many tears her most faithful subjects, she embarked secretly, in the middle of the night, on a ship of Provence, and made for Marseilles. Louis of Tarentum, following the prompting of his adventure-loving character, left Naples at the head of three thousand horse and a considerable number of foot, and took up his post on the banks of the Voltorno, there to contest the enemy's passage; but the King of Hungary foresaw the stratagem, and while his adversary was waiting for him at Capua, he arrived at Beneventum by the mountains of Alife and Morcone, and on the same day received Neapolitan envoys: they in a magnificent display of eloquence congratulated him on his entrance, offered the keys of the town, and swore obedience to him as being the legitimate successor of Charles of Anjou. The news of the surrender of Naples soon reached the queen's camp, and all the princes of the blood and the generals left Louis of Tarentum and took refuge in the capital. Resistance was impossible. Louis, accompanied by his counsellor, Nicholas Acciajuoli, went to Naples on the same evening on which his relatives quitted the town to get away from the enemy. Every hope of safety was vanishing as the hours passed by; his brothers and cousins begged him to go at once, so as not to draw down upon the town the king's vengeance, but unluckily there was no ship in the harbour that was ready to set sail. The terror of the princes was at its height; but Louis, trusting in his luck, started with the brave

Acciajuoli in an unseaworthy boat, and ordering four sailors to row with all their might, in a few minutes disappeared, leaving his family in a great state of anxiety till they learned that he had reached Pisa, whither he had gone to join the queen in Provence. Charles of Durazzo and Robert of Tarentum, who were the eldest respectively of the two branches of the royal family, after hastily consulting, decided to soften the Hungarian monarch's wrath by a complete submission. Leaving their young brothers at Naples, they accordingly set off for Aversa, where the king was. Louis received them with every mark of friendship, and asked with much interest why their brothers were not with them. The princes replied that their young brothers had stayed at Naples to prepare a worthy reception for His Majesty. Louis thanked them for their kind intentions, but begged them to invite the young princes now, saying that it would be infinitely more pleasant to enter Naples with all his family, and that he was most anxious to see his cousins. Charles and Robert, to please the king, sent equerries to bid their brothers come to Aversa; but Louis of Durazzo, the eldest of the boys, with many tears begged the others not to obey, and sent a message that he was prevented by a violent headache from leaving Naples. So puerile an excuse could not fail to annoy Charles, and the same day he compelled the unfortunate boys to appear before the king, sending a formal order which admitted of no delay. Louis of Hungary embraced them warmly one after the other, asked them several questions in an affectionate way, kept them to supper, and only let them go quite late at night.

When the Duke of Durazzo reached his room, Lello of Aquila and the Count of Fondi slipped mysteriously to the side of his bed, and making sure that no one could hear, told him that the king in a council held that morning had decided to kill him and to imprison the other princes. Charles heard them out, but incredulously: suspecting treachery, he dryly replied that he had too much confidence in his cousin's loyalty to believe such a black calumny. Lello insisted, begging him in the name of his dearest friends to listen;

but the duke was impatient, and harshly ordered him to depart.

The next day there was the same kindness on the king's part, the same affection shown to the children, the same invitation to supper. The banquet was magnificent; the room was brilliantly lighted, and the reflections were dazzling: vessels of gold shone on the table, the intoxicating perfume of flowers filled the air; wine foamed in the goblets and flowed from the flagons in ruby streams: conversation, excited and discursive, was heard on every side: all faces beamed with joy.

Charles of Durazzo sat opposite the king, at a separate table among his brothers. Little by little his look grew fixed, his brow pensive. He was fancying that André might have supped in this very hall on the eve of his tragic end, and he thought how all concerned in that death had either died in torment or were now languishing in prison; the queen, an exile and a fugitive, was begging pity from strangers: he alone was free. The thought made him tremble; but admiring his own cleverness in pursuing his infernal schemes, and putting away his sad looks, he smiled again with an expression of indefinable pride. The madman at this moment was scoffing at the justice of God. But Lello of Aquila, who was waiting at the table, bent down, whispering gloomily—

"Unhappy duke, why did you refuse to believe me? Fly, while there is yet time."

Charles, angered by the man's obstinacy, threatened that if he were such a fool as to say any more, he would repeat every word aloud.

"I have done my duty," murmured Lello, bowing his head; "now it must happen as God wills."

As he left off speaking, the king rose, and as the duke went up to take his leave, his face suddenly changed, and he cried in an awful voice—

"Traitor! At length you are in my hands, and you shall die as you deserve; but before you are handed over to the executioner, confess with your own lips your deeds of treachery towards our royal majesty: so shall we need no other witness to con-

demn you to a punishment proportioned to your crimes. Between our two selves, Duke of Durazzo—tell me first why, by your infamous manœuvring, you aided your uncle, the Cardinal of Perigord, to hinder the coronation of my brother, and so led him on, since he had no royal prerogative of his own, to his miserable end? Oh, make no attempt to deny it. Here is the letter sealed with your seal: in secret you wrote it, but it accuses you in public. Then why, after bringing us hither to avenge our brother's death,—of which you beyond all doubt were the cause, —why did you suddenly turn to the queen's party and march against our town of Aquila, daring to raise an army against our faithful subjects? You hoped, traitor, to make use of us as a footstool to mount the throne withal, as soon as you were free from every other rival. Then you would but have awaited our departure to kill the viceroy we should have left in our place, and so seize the kingdom. But this time your foresight has been at fault. There is yet another crime worse than all the rest, a crime of high treason, which I shall remorselessly punish. You carried off the bride that our ancestor King Robert designed for me, as you knew, by his will. Answer, wretch: what excuse can you make for the rape of the Princess Marie?"

Anger had so changed Louis's voice that the last words sounded like the roar of a wild beast: his eyes glittered with a feverish light, his lips were pale and trembling. Charles and his brothers fell upon their knees, frozen by mortal terror, and the unhappy duke twice tried to speak, but his teeth were chattering so violently that he could not articulate a single word. At last, casting his eyes about him and seeing his poor brothers, innocent and ruined by his fault, he regained some sort of courage, and said—

"My lord, you look upon me with a terrible countenance that makes me tremble. But on my knees I entreat you, have mercy on me if I have done wrong, for God is my witness that I did not call you to this kingdom with any criminal intention: I have always desired, and still desire, your supremacy in all the sincerity of my soul. Some treacherous counsellors, I am certain, have contrived to draw down your hatred upon me. If it is

true, as you say, that I went with an armed force to Aquila, I was compelled by Queen Joan, and I could not do otherwise; but as soon as I heard of your arrival at Fermo I took my troops away again. I hope for the love of Christ I may obtain your mercy and pardon, by reason of my former services and constant loyalty. But as I see you are now angry with me I say no more waiting for your fury to pass over. Once again, my lord, have pity upon us, since we are in the hands of your Majesty."

The king turned away his head, and retired slowly, confiding the prisoners to the care of Stephen Vayvoda and the Count of Zornic, who guarded them during the night in a room adjoining the king's chamber. The next day Louis held another meeting of his council, and ordered that Charles should have his throat cut on the very spot where poor André had been hanged. He then sent the other princes of the blood, loaded with chains, to Hungary, where they were long kept prisoners. Charles, quite thunderstruck by such an unexpected blow, overwhelmed by the thought of his past crimes, trembled like a coward face to face with death, and seemed completely crushed. Bowed upon his knees, his face half hidden in his hands, from time to time convulsive sobs escaped him, as he tried to fix the thoughts that chased each other through his mind like the shapes of a monstrous dream. Night was in his soul, but every now and then light flashed across the darkness, and over the gloomy background of his despair passed gilded figures fleeing from him with smiles of mockery. In his ears buzzed voices from the other world; he saw a long procession of ghosts, like the conspirators whom Nicholas of Melazzo had pointed out in the vaults of Castel Nuovo. But these phantoms each held his head in his hand, and shaking it by the hair, bespattered him with drops of blood. Some brandished whips, some knives: each threatened Charles with his instrument of torture. Pursued by the nocturnal train, the hapless man opened his mouth for one mighty cry, but his breath was gone, and it died upon his lips. Then he beheld his mother stretching out her arms from afar, and he fancied that if he could but reach her he would be safe. But at each step the path grew more and more narrow, pieces of his flesh

were torn off by the approaching walls; at last, breathless, naked and bleeding, he reached his goal; but his mother glided farther away, and it was all to begin over again. The phantoms pursued him, grinning and screaming in his ears—

"Cursed be he who slayeth his mother!"

Charles was roused from these horrors by the cries of his brothers, who had come to embrace him for the last time before embarking. The duke in a low voice asked their pardon, and then fell back into his state of despair. The children were dragged away, begging to be allowed to share their brother's fate, and crying for death as an alleviation of their woes. At length they were separated, but the sound of their lamentation sounded long in the heart of the condemned man. After a few moments, two soldiers and two equerries came to tell the duke that his hour had come.

Charles followed them, unresisting, to the fatal balcony where André had been hanged. He was there asked if he desired to confess, and when he said yes, they brought a monk from the same convent where the terrible scene had been enacted: he listened to the confession of all his sins, and granted him absolution. The duke at once rose and walked to the place where André had been thrown down for the cord to be put round his neck, and there, kneeling again, he asked his executioners—

"Friends, in pity tell me, is there any hope for my life?"

And when they answered no, Charles exclaimed—

"Then carry out your instructions."

At these words, one of the equerries plunged his sword into his breast, and the other cut his head off with a knife, and his corpse was thrown over the balcony into the garden where André's body had lain for three days unburied.

CHAPTER VII

THE King of Hungary, his black flag ever borne before him, started for Naples, refusing all offered honours, and rejecting the canopy beneath which he was to make his entry, not even stopping to give audience to the chief citizens or to receive the acclamations of the crowd. Armed at all points, he made for Castel Nuovo, leaving behind him dismay and fear. His first act on entering the city was to order Doña Cancha to be burnt, her punishment having been deferred by reason of her pregnancy. Like the others, she was drawn on a cart to the square of St. Eligius, and there consigned to the flames. The young creature, whose suffering had not impaired her beauty, was dressed as for a festival, and laughing like a mad thing up to the last moment, mocked at her executioners and threw kisses to the crowd.

A few days later, Godfrey of Marsana, Count of Squillace and grand admiral of the kingdom, was arrested by the king's orders. His life was promised him on condition of his delivering up Conrad of Catanzaro, one of his relatives, accused of conspiring against André. The grand admiral committed this act of shameless treachery, and did not shrink from sending his own son to persuade Conrad to come to the town. The poor wretch was given over to the king, and tortured alive on a wheel made with sharp knives. The sight of these barbarities, far from calming the king's rage, seemed to inflame it the more. Every day there were new accusations and new sentences. The prisons were crowded : Louis's punishments were redoubled in severity. A fear arose that the town, and indeed the whole kingdom, were to be treated as having taken part in André's death. Murmurs arose against this barbarous rule, and all

men's thoughts turned towards their fugitive queen. The Neapolitan barons had taken the oath of fidelity with no willing hearts; and when it came to the turn of the Counts of San Severino, they feared a trick of some kind, and refused to appear all together before the Hungarian, but took refuge in the town of Salerno, and sent Archbishop Roger, their brother, to make sure of the king's intentions beforehand. Louis received him magnificently, and appointed him privy councillor and grand protonotary. Then, and not till then, did Robert of San Severino and Roger, Count of Chiaramonte, venture into the king's presence; after doing homage, they retired to their homes. The other barons followed their example of caution, and hiding their discontent under a show of respect, awaited a favourable moment for shaking off the foreign yoke. But the queen had encountered no obstacle in her flight, and arrived at Nice five days later. Her passage through Provence was like a triumph. Her beauty, youth, and misfortunes, even certain mysterious reports as to her adventures, all contributed to arouse the interest of the Provençal people. Games and fêtes were improvised to soften the hardship of exile for the proscribed princess; but amid the outbursts of joy from every town, castle, and city, Joan, always sad, lived ever in her silent grief and glowing memories.

At the gates of Aix she found the clergy, the nobility, and the chief magistrates, who received her respectfully but with no signs of enthusiasm. As the queen advanced, her astonishment increased as she saw the coldness of the people and the solemn, constrained air of the great men who escorted her. Many anxious thoughts alarmed her, and she even went so far as to fear some intrigue of the King of Hungary. Scarcely had her cortège arrived at Castle Arnaud, when the nobles, dividing into two ranks, let the queen pass with her counsellor Spinelli and two women; then closing up, they cut her off from the rest of her suite. After this, each in turn took up his station as guardian of the fortress.

There was no room for doubt: the queen was a prisoner; but the cause of the manœuvre it was impossible to guess.

She asked the high dignitaries, and they, protesting respectful devotion, refused to explain till they had news from Avignon. Meanwhile all honours that a queen could receive were lavished on Joan; but she was kept in sight and forbidden to go out. This new trouble increased her depression: she did not know what had happened to Louis of Tarentum, and her imagination, always apt at creating disasters, instantly suggested that she would soon be weeping for his loss.

But Louis, always with his faithful Acciajuoli, had after many fatiguing adventures been shipwrecked at the port of Pisa; thence he had taken route for Florence, to beg men and money; but the Florentines decided to keep an absolute neutrality, and refused to receive him. The prince, losing his last hope, was pondering gloomy plans, when Nicholas Acciajuoli thus resolutely addressed him:—

"My lord, it is not given to mankind to enjoy prosperity for ever: there are misfortunes beyond all human foresight. You were once rich and powerful, and you are now a fugitive in disguise, begging the help of others. You must reserve your strength for better days. I still have a considerable fortune, and also have relations and friends whose wealth is at my disposal: let us try to make our way to the queen, and at once decide what we can do. I myself shall always defend you and obey you as my lord and master."

The prince received these generous offers with the utmost gratitude, and told his counsellor that he placed his person in his hands and all that remained of his future. Acciajuoli, not content with serving his master as a devoted servant, persuaded his brother Angelo, Archbishop of Florence, who was in great favour at Clement VI's court, to join with them in persuading the pope to interest himself in the cause of Louis of Tarentum. So, without further delay, the prince, his counsellor, and the good prelate made their way to the port of Marseilles, but learning that the queen was a prisoner at Aix, they embarked at Acque-Morte, and went straight to Avignon. It soon appeared that the pope had a real affection and esteem for the character of the Archbishop of Florence, for Louis was

received with paternal kindness at the court of Avignon, which was far more than he had expected. When he kneeled before the sovereign pontiff, His Holiness bent affectionately towards him and helped him to rise, saluting him by the title of king.

Two days later, another prelate, the Archbishop of Aix, came into the queen's presence, and solemnly bowing before her, spoke as follows:—

"Most gracious and dearly beloved sovereign, permit the most humble and devoted of your servants to ask pardon, in the name of your subjects, for the painful but necessary measure they have thought fit to take concerning your Majesty. When you arrived on our coast, your loyal town of Aix had learned from a trustworthy source that the King of France was proposing to give our country to one of his own sons, making good this loss to you by the cession of another domain, also that the Duke of Normandy had come to Avignon to request this exchange in person. We were quite decided, madam, and had made a vow to God that we would give up everything rather than suffer the hateful tyranny of the French. But before spilling blood we thought it best to secure your august person as a sacred hostage, a sacred ark which no man dared touch but was smitten to the ground, which indeed must keep away from our walls the scourge of war. We have now read the formal annulment of this hateful plan, in a brief sent by the sovereign pontiff from Avignon; and in this brief he himself guarantees your good faith.

"We give you your full and entire liberty, and henceforth we shall only endeavour to keep you among us by prayers and protestations. Go then, madam, if that is your pleasure, but before you leave these lands, which will be plunged into mourning by your withdrawal, leave with us some hope that you forgive the apparent violence to which we have subjected you, only in the fear that we might lose you; and remember that on the day when you cease to be our queen you sign the death-warrant of all your subjects."

Joan reassured the archbishop and the deputation from her

good town of Aix with a melancholy smile, and promised that she would always cherish the memory of their affection. For this time she could not be deceived as to the real sentiments of the nobles and people; and a fidelity so uncommon, revealed with sincere tears, touched her heart and made her reflect bitterly upon her past. But a league's distance from Avignon a magnificent triumphal reception awaited her. Louis of Tarentum and all the cardinals present at the court had come out to meet her. Pages in dazzling dress carried above Joan's head a canopy of scarlet velvet, ornamented with fleur-de-lys in gold and plumes. Handsome youths and lovely girls, their heads crowned with flowers, went before her singing her praise. The streets were bordered with a living hedge of people, the houses were decked out, the bells rang a triple peal, as at the great Church festivals. Clement VI first received the queen at the castle of Avignon with all the pomp he knew so well how to employ on solemn occasions, then she was lodged in the palace of Cardinal Napoleon of the Orsini, who on his return from the Conclave at Perugia had built this regal dwelling at Villeneuve, inhabited later by the popes.

No words could give an idea of the strangely disturbed condition of Avignon at this period. Since Clement V had transported the seat of the papacy to Provence, there had sprung up, in this rival to Rome, squares, churches, cardinals' palaces, of unparalleled splendour. All the business of nations and kings was transacted at the castle of Avignon. Ambassadors from every court, merchants of every nation, adventurers of all kinds, Italians, Spaniards, Hungarians, Arabs, Jews, soldiers, Bohemians, jesters, poets, monks, courtesans, swarmed and clustered here, and hustled one another in the streets. There was confusion of tongues, customs, and costumes, an inextricable mixture of splendour and rags, riches and misery, debasement and grandeur. The austere poets of the Middle Ages stigmatised the accursed city in their writings under the name of the New Babylon.

There is one curious monument of Joan's sojourn at Avignon and the exercise of her authority as sovereign. She was

indignant at the effrontery of the women of the town, who elbowed everybody shamelessly in the streets, and published a notable edict, the first of its kind, which has since served as a model in like cases, to compel all unfortunate women who trafficked in their honour to live shut up together in a house, that was bound to be open every day in the year except the last three days of Holy Week, the entrance to be barred to Jews at all times. An abbess, chosen once a year, had the supreme control over this strange convent. Rules were established for the maintenance of order, and severe penalties inflicted for any infringement of discipline. The lawyers of the period gained a great reputation by this salutary institution; the fair ladies of Avignon were eager in their defence of the queen in spite of the calumnious reports that strove to tarnish her reputation: with one voice the wisdom of André's widow was extolled. The concert of praises was disturbed, however, by murmurs from the recluses themselves, who, in their own brutal language, declared that Joan of Naples was impeding their commerce so as to get a monopoly for herself.

Meanwhile Marie of Durazzo had joined her sister. After her husband's death she had found means to take refuge in the convent of Santa Croce with her two little daughters; and while Louis of Hungary was busy burning his victims, the unhappy Marie had contrived to make her escape in the frock of an old monk, and as by a miracle to get on board a ship that was setting sail for Provence. She related to her sister the frightful details of the king's cruelty. And soon a new proof of his implacable hatred confirmed the tales of the poor princess: Louis's ambassadors appeared at the court of Avignon to demand formally the queen's condemnation.

It was a great day when Joan of Naples pleaded her own cause before the pope, in the presence of all the cardinals then at Avignon, all the ambassadors of foreign powers, and all the eminent persons come from every quarter of Europe to be present at this trial, unique in the annals of history. We must imagine a vast enclosure, in whose midst upon a raised throne, as president of the august tribunal, sat God's vicar on earth,

absolute and supreme judge, emblem of temporal and spiritual power, of authority human and divine. To right and left of the sovereign pontiff, the cardinals in their red robes sat in chairs set round in a circle, and behind these princes of the Sacred College stretched rows of bishops extending to the end of the hall, with vicars, canons, deacons, archdeacons, and the whole immense hierarchy of the Church. Facing the pontifical throne was a platform reserved for the Queen of Naples and her suite. At the pope's feet stood the ambassadors from the King of Hungary, who played the part of accusers without speaking a word, the circumstances of the crime and all the proofs having been discussed beforehand by a committee appointed for the purpose. The rest of the hall was filled by a brilliant crowd of high dignitaries, illustrious captains, and noble envoys, all vying with one another in proud display. Everyone ceased to breathe, all eyes were fixed on the daïs whence Joan was to speak her own defence. A movement of uneasy curiosity made this compact mass of humanity surge towards the centre, the cardinals above raised like proud peacocks hovering over a golden harvest-field shaken in the breeze.

The queen appeared, hand in hand with her uncle, the old Cardinal of Perigord, and her aunt, the Countess Agnes. Her gait was so modest and proud, her countenance so melancholy and pure, her looks so open and confident, that even before she spoke every heart was hers. Joan was now twenty years of age; her magnificent beauty was fully developed, but an extreme pallor concealed the brilliance of her transparent satin skin, and her hollow cheek told the tale of expiation and suffering. Among the spectators who looked on most eagerly there was a certain young man with strongly marked features, glowing eyes, and brown hair, whom we shall meet again later on in our narrative; but we will not divert our readers' attention, but only tell them that his name was James of Aragon, that he was Prince of Majorca, and would have been ready to shed every drop of his blood only to check one single tear that hung on Joan's eyelids. The queen spoke in an agitated, trembling voice, stopping from time to time to dry her moist

and shining eyes, or to breathe one of those deep sighs that go straight to the heart. She told the tale of her husband's death painfully and vividly, painted truthfully the mad terror that had seized upon her and struck her down at that frightful time, raised her hands to her brow with the gesture of despair, as though she would wrest the madness from her brain —and a shudder of pity and awe passed through the assembled crowd. It is a fact that at this moment, if her words were false, her anguish was both sincere and terrible. An angel soiled by crime, she lied like Satan himself, but like him too she suffered all the agony of remorse and pride. Thus, when at the end of her speech she burst into tears and implored help and protection against the usurper of her kingdom, a cry of general assent drowned her closing words, several hands flew to their sword-hilts, and the Hungarian ambassadors retired covered with shame and confusion.

That same evening the sentence, to the great joy of all, was proclaimed, that Joan was innocent and acquitted of all concern in the assassination of her husband. But as her conduct after the event and the indifference she had shown about pursuing the authors of the crime admitted of no valid excuse, the pope declared that there were plain traces of magic, and that the wrong-doing attributed to Joan was the result of some baneful charm cast upon her, which she could by no possible means resist. At the same time, His Holiness confirmed her marriage with Louis of Tarentum, and bestowed on him the order of the Rose of Gold and the title of King of Sicily and Jerusalem. Joan, it is true, had on the eve of her acquittal sold the town of Avignon to the pope for the sum of 80,000 florins.

While the queen was pleading her cause at the court of Clement VI, a dreadful epidemic, called the Black Plague—the same that Boccaccio has described so wonderfully—was ravaging the kingdom of Naples, and indeed the whole of Italy. According to the calculation of Matteo Villani, Florence lost three-fifths of her population, Bologna two-thirds, and nearly all Europe was reduced in some such frightful proportion. The Neapolitans were already weary of the cruelties and greed

of the Hungarians, they were only awaiting some opportunity to revolt against the stranger's oppression, and to recall their lawful sovereign, whom, for all her ill deeds, they had never ceased to love. The attraction of youth and beauty was deeply felt by this pleasure-loving people. Scarcely had the pestilence thrown confusion into the army and town, when loud cursing arose against the tyrant and his executioners. Louis of Hungary, suddenly threatened by the wrath of Heaven and the people's vengeance, was terrified both by the plague and by the riots, and disappeared in the middle of the night. Leaving the government of Naples in the hands of Conrad Lupo, one of his captains, he embarked hastily at Berletta, and left the kingdom in very much the same way as Louis of Tarentum, fleeing from him, had left it a few months before.

This news arrived at Avignon just when the pope was about to send the queen his bull of absolution. It was at once decided to take away the kingdom from Louis's viceroy. Nicholas Acciajuoli left for Naples with the marvellous bull that was to prove to all men the innocence of the queen, to banish all scruples and stir up a new enthusiasm. The counsellor first went to the castle of Melzi, commanded by his son Lorenzo: this was the only fortress that had always held out. The father and son embraced with the honourable pride that near relatives may justly feel when they meet after they have united in the performance of a heroic duty. From the governor of Melzi Louis of Tarentum's counsellor learned that all men were wearied of the arrogance and vexatious conduct of the queen's enemies, and that a conspiracy was in train, started in the University of Naples, but with vast ramifications all over the kingdom, and moreover that there was dissension in the enemy's army. The indefatigable counsellor went from Apulia to Naples, traversing towns and villages, collecting men everywhere, proclaiming loudly the acquittal of the queen and her marriage with Louis of Tarentum, also that the pope was offering indulgences to such as would receive with joy their lawful sovereigns. Then seeing that the people shouted as he went by, "Long live Joan! Death to the Hungarians!" he

returned and told his sovereigns in what frame of mind he had left their subjects.

Joan borrowed money wherever she could, armed galleys, and left Marseilles with her husband, her sister, and two faithful advisers, Acciajuoli and Spinelli, on the 10th of September 1348. The king and queen not being able to enter at the harbour, which was in the enemy's power, disembarked at Santa Maria del Carmine, near the river Sebeto, amid the frenzied applause of an immense crowd, and accompanied by all the Neapolitan nobles. They made their way to the palace of Messire Ajutorio, near Porta Capuana, the Hungarians having fortified themselves in all the castles; but Acciajuoli, at the head of the queen's partisans, blockaded the fortresses so ably that half of the enemy were obliged to surrender, and the other half took to flight and were scattered about the interior of the kingdom. We shall now follow Louis of Tarentum in his arduous adventures in Apulia, the Calabrias, and the Abruzzi, where he recovered one by one the fortresses that the Hungarians had taken. By dint of unexampled valour and patience, he at last mastered nearly all the more considerable places, when suddenly everything changed, and fortune turned her back upon him for the second time. A German captain called Warner, who had deserted the Hungarian army to sell himself to the queen, had again played the traitor and sold himself once more, allowed himself to be surprised at Corneto by Conrad Lupo, the King of Hungary's vicar-general, and openly joined him, taking along with him a great party of the adventurers who fought under his orders. This unexpected defection forced Louis of Tarentum to retire to Naples. The King of Hungary soon learning that the troops had rallied round his banner, and only awaited his return to march upon the capital, disembarked with a strong reinforcement of cavalry at the port of Manfredonia, and taking Trani, Canosa, and Salerno, went forward to lay siege to Aversa.

The news fell like a thunder-clap on Joan and her husband. The Hungarian army consisted of 10,000 horse and more than 7000 infantry, and Aversa had only 500 soldiers

under Giacomo Pignatelli. In spite of the immense disproportion of the numbers, the Neapolitan general vigorously repelled the attack; and the King of Hungary, fighting in the front, was wounded in his foot by an arrow. Then Louis, seeing that it would be difficult to take the place by storm, determined to starve them out. For three months the besieged performed prodigies of valour, and further assistance was impossible. Their capitulation was expected at any moment, unless indeed they decided to perish every man. Renaud des Baux, who was to come from Marseilles with a squadron of ten ships to defend the ports of the capital and secure the queen's flight, should the Hungarian army get possession of Naples, had been delayed by adverse winds and obliged to stop on the way. All things seemed to conspire in favour of the enemy. Louis of Tarentum, whose generous soul refused to shed the blood of his brave men in an unequal and desperate struggle, nobly sacrificed himself, and made an offer to the King of Hungary to settle their quarrel in single combat. We append the authentic letters that passed between Joan's husband and André's brother.

"Illustrious King of Hungary, who has come to invade our kingdom, we, by the grace of God King of Jerusalem and Sicily, invite you to single combat. We know that you are in no wise disturbed by the death of your lancers or the other pagans in your suite, no more indeed than if they were dogs; but we, fearing harm to our own soldiers and men-at-arms, desire to fight with you personally, to put an end to the present war and restore peace to our kingdom. He who survives shall be king. And therefore, to ensure that this duel shall take place, we definitely propose as a site either Paris, in the presence of the King of France, or one of the towns of Perugia, Avignon, or Naples. Choose one of these four places, and send us your reply."

The King of Hungary first consulted with his council, and then replied:—

"Great King, we have read and considered your letter sent to us by the bearer of these presents, and by your invitation to a duel we are most supremely pleased; but we do

not approve of any of the places you propose, since they are all suspect, and for several reasons. The King of France is your maternal grandfather, and although we are also connected by blood with him, the relationship is not so near. The town of Avignon, although nominally belonging to the sovereign pontiff, is the capital of Provence, and has always been subject to your rule. Neither have we any more confidence in Perugia, for that town is devoted to your cause. As to the city of Naples, there is no need to say that we refuse that rendezvous, since it is in revolt against us and you are there as king. But if you wish to fight with us, let it be in the presence of the Emperor of Germany, who is lord supreme, or the King of England, who is our common friend, or the Patriarch of Aquilea, a good Catholic. If you do not approve of any of the places we propose, we shall soon be near you with our army, and so remove all difficulties and delays. Then you can come forth, and our duel can take place in the presence of both armies."

After the interchange of these two letters, Louis of Tarentum proposed nothing further. The garrison at Aversa had capitulated after a heroic resistance, and it was known only too well that if the King of Hungary could get so far as the walls of Naples, he would not have to endanger his life in order to seize that city. Happily the Provençal galleys had reached port at last. The king and the queen had only just time to embark and take refuge at Gaeta. The Hungarian army arrived at Naples. The town was on the point of yielding, and had sent messengers to the king humbly demanding peace; but the speeches of the Hungarians showed such insolence that the people, irritated past endurance, took up arms, and resolved to defend their household gods with all the energy of despair.

CHAPTER VIII

WHILE the Neapolitans were holding out against their enemy at the Porta Capuana, a strange scene was being enacted at the other side of the town, a scene that shows us in lively colours the violence and treachery of this barbarous age. The widow of Charles of Durazzo was shut up in the castle of Ovo, and awaiting in feverish anxiety the arrival of the ship that was to take her to the queen. The poor Princess Marie, pressing her weeping children to her heart, pale, with dishevelled locks, fixed eyes, and drawn lips, was listening for every sound, distracted between hope and fear. Suddenly steps resounded along the corridor, a friendly voice was heard, Marie fell upon her knees with a cry of joy: her liberator had come.

Renaud des Baux, admiral of the Provençal squadron, respectfully advanced, followed by his eldest son Robert and his chaplain.

"God, I thank Thee!" exclaimed Marie, rising to her feet; "we are saved."

"One moment, madam," said Renaud, stopping her: "you are indeed saved, but upon one condition."

"A condition?" murmured the princess in surprise.

"Listen, madam. The King of Hungary, the avenger of André's murderers, the slayer of your husband, is at the gates of Naples; the people and soldiers will succumb, as soon as their last gallant effort is spent: the army of the conqueror is about to spread desolation and death throughout the city by fire and the sword. This time the Hungarian butcher will spare no victims: he will kill the mother before her children's eyes, the children in their mother's arms. The drawbridge of this castle is up and there are none on guard; every man who can

wield a sword is now at the other end of the town. Woe to you, Marie of Durazzo, if the King of Hungary shall remember that you preferred his rival to him!"

"But have you not come here to save me?" cried Marie in a voice of anguish. "Joan, my sister, did she not command you to take me to her?"

"Your sister is no longer in the position to give orders," replied Renaud, with a disdainful smile. "She had nothing for me but thanks because I saved her life, and her husband's too, when he fled like a coward before the man whom he had dared to challenge to a duel."

Marie looked fixedly at the admiral, to assure herself that it was really he who thus arrogantly talked about his masters. But she was terrified at his imperturbable expression, and said gently—

"As I owe my life and my children's lives solely to your generosity, I am grateful to you beyond all measure. But we must hurry, my lord: every moment I fancy I hear cries of vengeance, and you would not leave me now a prey to my brutal enemy?"

"God forbid, madam; I will save you at the risk of my life; but I have said already, I impose a condition."

"What is it?" said Marie, with forced calm.

"That you marry my son on the instant, in the presence of our reverend chaplain."

"Rash man!" cried Marie, recoiling, her face scarlet with indignation and shame; "you dare to speak thus to the sister of your legitimate sovereign? Give thanks to God that I will pardon an insult offered, as I know, in a moment of madness; try by your devotion to make me forget what you have said."

The count, without one word, signed to his son and a priest to follow, and prepared to depart. As he crossed the threshold Marie ran to him, and clasping her hands, prayed him in God's name never to forsake her. Renaud stopped.

"I might easily take my revenge," he said, "for your affront

when you refuse my son in your pride; but that business I leave to Louis of Hungary, who will acquit himself, no doubt, with credit."

"Have mercy on my poor daughters!" cried the princess; "mercy at least for my poor babes, if my own tears cannot move you."

"If you loved your children," said the admiral, frowning, "you would have done your duty at once."

"But I do not love your son!" cried Marie, proud but trembling. "O God, must a wretched woman's heart be thus trampled? You, father, a minister of truth and justice, tell this man that God must not be called on to witness an oath dragged from the weak and helpless!"

She turned to the admiral's son, and added, sobbing—

"You are young, perhaps you have loved: one day no doubt you will love. I appeal to your loyalty as a young man, to your courtesy as a knight, to all your noblest impulses; join me, and turn your father away from his fatal project. You have never seen me before: you do not know but that in my secret heart I love another. Your pride should be revolted at the sight of an unhappy woman casting herself at your feet and imploring your favour and protection. One word from you, Robert, and I shall bless you every moment of my life: the memory of you will be graven in my heart like the memory of a guardian angel, and my children shall name you nightly in their prayers, asking God to grant your wishes. Oh, say, will you not save me? Who knows, later on I may love you—with real love."

"I must obey my father," Robert replied, never lifting his eyes to the lovely suppliant.

The priest was silent. Two minutes passed, and these four persons, each absorbed in his own thoughts, stood motionless as statues carved at the four corners of a tomb. Marie was thrice tempted to throw herself into the sea. But a confused distant sound suddenly struck upon her ears: little by little it drew nearer, voices were more distinctly heard; women in the street were uttering cries of distress—

"Fly, fly! God has forsaken us; the Hungarians are in the town!"

The tears of Marie's children were the answer to these cries; and little Margaret, raising her hands to her mother, expressed her fear in speech that was far beyond her years. Renaud, without one look at this touching picture, drew his son towards the door.

"Stay," said the princess, extending her hand with a solemn gesture: "as God sends no other aid to my children, it is His will that the sacrifice be accomplished."

She fell on her knees before the priest, bending her head like a victim who offers her neck to the executioner. Robert des Baux took his place beside her, and the priest pronounced the formula that united them for ever, consecrating the infamous deed by a sacrilegious blessing.

"All is over!" murmured Maria of Durazzo, looking tearfully on her little daughters.

"No, all is not yet over," said the admiral harshly, pushing her towards another room; "before we leave, the marriage must be consummated."

"O just God!" cried the princess, in a voice torn with anguish, and she fell swooning to the floor.

Renaud des Baux directed his ships towards Marseilles, where he hoped to get his son crowned Count of Provence, thanks to his strange marriage with Marie of Durazzo. But this cowardly act of treason was not to go unpunished. The wind rose with fury, and drove him towards Gaeta, where the queen and her husband had just arrived. Renaud bade his sailors keep in the open, threatening to throw any man into the sea who dared to disobey him. The crew at first murmured; soon cries of mutiny rose on every side. The admiral, seeing he was lost, passed from threats to prayers. But the princess, who had recovered her senses at the first thunder-clap, dragged herself up to the bridge and screamed for help.

"Come to me, Louis! Come, my barons! Death to the cowardly wretches who have outraged my honour!"

Louis of Tarentum jumped into a boat, followed by some

ten of his bravest men, and, rowing rapidly, reached the ship. Then Marie told him her story in a word, and he turned upon the admiral a lightning glance, as though defying him to make any defence.

"Wretch!" cried the king, transfixing the traitor with his sword.

Then he had the son loaded with chains, and also the unworthy priest who had served as accomplice to the admiral, who now expiated his odious crime by death. He took the princess and her children in his boat, and re-entered the harbour.

The Hungarians, however, forcing one of the gates of Naples, marched triumphant to Castel Nuovo. But as they were crossing the Piazza delle Correggie, the Neapolitans perceived that the horses were so weak and the men so reduced by all they had undergone during the siege of Aversa that a mere puff of wind would dispense this phantom-like army. Changing from a state of panic to real daring, the people rushed upon their conquerors, and drove them outside the walls by which they had just entered. The sudden violent reaction broke the pride of the King of Hungary, and made him more tractable when Clement VI decided that he ought at last to interfere. A truce was concluded first from the month of February 1350 to the beginning of April 1351, and the next year this was converted into a real peace, Joan paying to the King of Hungary the sum of 300,000 florins for the expenses of the war.

After the Hungarians had gone, the pope sent a legate to crown Joan and Louis of Tarentum, and the 25th of May, the day of Pentecost, was chosen for the ceremony. All contemporary historians speak enthusiastically of this magnificent fête. Its details have been immortalised by Giotto in the frescoes of the church which from this day bore the name of L'Incoronata. A general amnesty was declared for all who had taken part in the late wars on either side, and the king and queen were greeted with shouts of joy as they solemnly paraded beneath the canopy, with all the barons of the kingdom in their train.

But the day's joy was impaired by an accident which to a superstitious people seemed of evil augury. Louis of Tarentum, riding a richly caparisoned horse, had just passed the Porta Petruccia, when some ladies looking out from a high window threw such a quantity of flowers at the king that his frightened steed reared and broke his rein. Louis could not hold him, so jumped lightly to the ground; but the crown fell at his feet and was broken into three pieces. On that very day the only daughter of Joan and Louis died.

But the king not wishing to sadden the brilliant ceremony with show of mourning, kept up the jousts and tournaments for three days, and in memory of his coronation instituted the order of *Chevaliers du Noeud*. But from that day begun with an omen so sad, his life was nothing but a series of disillusions. After sustaining wars in Sicily and Apulia, and quailing the insurrection of Louis of Durazzo, who ended his days in the castle of Ovo, Louis of Tarentum, worn out by a life of pleasure, his health undermined by slow disease, overwhelmed with domestic trouble, succumbed to an acute fever on the 5th of June 1362, at the age of forty-two. His body had not been laid in its royal tomb at Saint Domenico before several aspirants appeared to the hand of the queen.

One was the Prince of Majorca, the handsome youth we have already spoken of: he bore her off triumphant over all rivals, including the son of the King of France. James of Aragon had one of those faces of melancholy sweetness which no woman can resist. Great troubles nobly borne had thrown as it were a funereal veil over his youthful days: more than thirteen years he had spent shut in an iron cage; when by the aid of a false key he had escaped from his dreadful prison, he wandered from one court to another seeking aid; it is even said that he was reduced to the lowest degree of poverty and forced to beg his bread. The young stranger's beauty and his adventures combined had impressed both Joan and Marie at the court of Avignon. Marie especially had conceived a violent passion for him, all the more so for the efforts she made to conceal it in her own bosom. Ever since James of Aragon

came to Naples, the unhappy princess, married with a dagger at her throat, had desired to purchase her liberty at the expense of crime. Followed by four armed men, she entered the prison where Robert des Baux was still suffering for a fault more his father's than his own. Marie stood before the prisoner, her arms crossed, her cheeks livid, her lips trembling. It was a terrible interview. This time it was she who threatened, the man who entreated pardon. Marie was deaf to his prayers, and the head of the luckless man fell bleeding at her feet, and her men threw the body into the sea. But God never allows a murder to go unpunished: James preferred the queen to her sister, and the widow of Charles of Durazzo gained nothing by her crime but the contempt of the man she loved, and a bitter remorse which brought her while yet young to the tomb.

Joan was married in turn to James of Aragon, son of the King of Majorca, and to Otho of Brunswick, of the imperial family of Saxony. We will pass rapidly over these years, and come to the denouement of this history of crime and expiation. James, parted from his wife, continued his stormy career, after a long contest in Spain with Peter the Cruel, who had usurped his kingdom: about the end of the year 1375 he died near Navarre. Otho also could not escape the Divine vengeance which hung over the court of Naples, but to the end he valiantly shared the queen's fortunes. Joan, since she had no lawful heir, adopted her nephew, Charles de la Paix (so called after the peace of Trevisa). He was the son of Louis Duras, who after rebelling against Louis of Tarentum, had died miserably in the castle of Ovo. The child would have shared his father's fate had not Joan interceded to spare his life, loaded him with kindness, and married him to Margaret, the daughter of her sister Marie and her cousin Charles, who was put to death by the King of Hungary.

Serious differences arose between the queen and one of her former subjects, Bartolommeo Prigiani, who had become pope under the name of Urban VI. Annoyed by the queen's opposition, the pope one day angrily said he would shut her

up in a convent. Joan, to avenge the insult, openly favoured Clement VII, the anti-pope, and offered him a home in her own castle, when, pursued by Pope Urban's army, he had taken refuge at Fondi. But the people rebelled against Clement, and killed the Archbishop of Naples, who had helped to elect him: they broke the cross that was carried in procession before the anti-pope, and hardly allowed him time to make his escape on shipboard to Provence. Urban declared that Joan was now dethroned, and released her subjects from their oath of fidelity to her, bestowing the crown of Sicily and Jerusalem upon Charles de la Paix, who marched on Naples with 8000 Hungarians. Joan, who could not believe in such base ingratitude, sent out his wife Margaret to meet her adopted son, though she might have kept her as a hostage, and his two children, Ladislaus and Joan, who became later the second queen of that name. But the victorious army soon arrived at the gates of Naples, and Charles blockaded the queen in her castle, forgetting in his ingratitude that she had saved his life and loved him like a mother.

Joan during the siege endured all the worst fatigues of war that any soldier has to bear. She saw her faithful friends fall around her wasted by hunger or decimated by sickness. When all food was exhausted, dead and decomposed bodies were thrown into the castle that they might pollute the air she breathed. Otho with his troops was kept at Aversa; Louis of Anjou, the brother of the King of France, whom she had named as her successor when she disinherited her nephew, never appeared to help her, and the Provençal ships from Clement VII were not due to arrive until all hope must be over. Joan asked for a truce of five days, promising that, if Otho had not come to relieve her in that time, she would surrender the fortress.

On the fifth day Otho's army appeared on the side of Piedigrotta. The fight was sharp on both sides, and Joan from the top of a tower could follow with her eyes the cloud of dust raised by her husband's horse in the thickest of the battle. The victory was long uncertain: at length the prince made so bold

an onset upon the royal standard, in his eagerness to meet his enemy hand to hand, that he plunged into the very middle of the army, and found himself pressed on every side. Covered with blood and sweat, his sword broken in his hand, he was forced to surrender. An hour later Charles was writing to his uncle, the King of Hungary, that Joan had fallen into his power, and he only awaited His Majesty's orders to decide her fate.

It was a fine May morning: the queen was under guard in the castle of Aversa: Otho had obtained his liberty on condition of his quitting Naples, and Louis of Anjou had at last got together an army of 50,000 men and was marching in hot haste to the conquest of the kingdom. None of this news had reached the ears of Joan, who for some days had lived in complete isolation. The spring lavished all her glory on these enchanted plains, which have earned the name of the blessed and happy country, *campagna felice*. The orange trees were covered with sweet white blossoms, the cherries laden with ruby fruit, the olives with young emerald leaves, the promegranate feathery with red bells; the wild mulberry, the evergreen laurel, all the strong budding vegetation, needing no help from man to flourish in this spot privileged by Nature, made one great garden, here and there interrupted by little hidden runlets. It was a forgotten Eden in this corner of the world. Joan at her window was breathing in the perfumes of spring, and her eyes misty with tears rested on a bed of flowery verdure: a light breeze, keen and balmy, blew upon her burning brow and offered a grateful coolness to her damp and fevered cheeks. Distant melodious voices, refrains of well-known songs, were all that disturbed the silence of the poor little room, the solitary nest where a life was passing away in tears and repentance, a life the most brilliant and eventful of a century of splendour and unrest.

The queen was slowly reviewing in her mind all her life since she ceased to be a child—fifty years of disillusionment and suffering. She thought first of her happy, peaceful childhood, her grandfather's blind affection, the pure joys of her

days of innocence, the exciting games with her little sister and tall cousins. Then she shuddered at the earliest thought of marriage, the constraint, the loss of liberty, the bitter regrets; she remembered with horror the deceitful words murmured in her ear, designed to sow the seeds of corruption and vice that were to poison her whole life. Then came the burning memories of her first love, the treachery and desertion of Robert of Cabane, the moments of madness passed like a dream in the arms of Bertrand of Artois—the whole drama up to its tragic denouement showed as in letters of fire on the dark background of her sombre thoughts. Then arose cries of anguish in her soul, even as on that terrible fatal night. She heard the voice of André asking mercy from his murderers. A long deadly silence followed his awful struggle, and the queen saw before her eyes the carts of infamy and the torture of her accomplices. All the rest of this vision was persecution, flight, exile, remorse, punishments from God and curses from the world. Around her was a frightful solitude: husbands, lovers, kindred, friends, all were dead; all she had loved or hated in the world were now no more; her joy, pain, desire, and hope had vanished for ever. The poor queen, unable to free herself from these visions of woe, violently tore herself away from the awful reverie, and kneeling at a prie-dieu, prayed with fervour. She was still beautiful, in spite of her extreme pallor; the noble lines of her face kept their pure oval; the fire of repentance in her great black eyes lit them up with superhuman brilliance, and the hope of pardon played in a heavenly smile upon her lips.

Suddenly the door of the room where Joan was so earnestly praying opened with a dull sound: two Hungarian barons in armour entered and signed to the queen to follow them. Joan arose silently and obeyed; but a cry of pain went up from her heart when she recognised the place where both André and Charles of Durazzo had died a violent death. But she collected her forces, and asked calmly why she was brought hither. For all answer, one of the men showed her a cord of silk and gold . . .

"May the will of a just God be done!" cried Joan, and fell upon her knees. Some minutes later she had ceased to suffer.

This was the third corpse that was thrown over the balcony at Aversa.

Bourdet, del. *Pardinel, sculp.*

DEATH OF JOAN OF NAPLES

THE COUNTESS DE SAINT-GÉRAN

THE COUNTESS DE SAINT-GÉRAN

ABOUT the end of the year 1639, a troop of horsemen arrived, towards midday, in a little village at the northern extremity of the province of Auvergne, from the direction of Paris. The country folk assembled at the noise, and found it to proceed from the provost of the mounted police and his men. The heat was excessive, the horses were bathed in sweat, the horsemen covered with dust, and the party seemed on its return from an important expedition. A man left the escort, and asked an old woman who was spinning at her door if there was not an inn in the place. The woman and her children showed him a bush hanging over a door at the end of the only street in the village, and the escort recommenced its march at a walk.

There was noticed, among the mounted men, a young man of distinguished appearance and richly dressed, who appeared to be a prisoner. This discovery redoubled the curiosity of the villagers, who followed the cavalcade as far as the door of the wine-shop. The host came out, cap in hand, and the provost enquired of him with a swaggering air if his pothouse was large enough to accommodate his troop, men and horses. The host replied that he had the best wine in the country to give to the king's servants, and that it would be easy to collect in the neighbourhood litter and forage enough for their horses. The provost listened contemptuously to these fine promises, gave the necessary orders as to what was to be done, and slid off his horse, uttering an oath proceeding from heat and fatigue. The horsemen clustered round the young man: one held his stirrup, and the provost deferentially gave way to him to enter the inn first. No more doubt could be entertained that he was a prisoner of importance, and all kinds of conjectures were made. The men

maintained that he must be charged with a great crime, otherwise a young nobleman of his rank would never have been arrested; the women argued, on the contrary, that it was impossible for such a pretty youth not to be innocent.

Inside the inn all was bustle: the serving-lads ran from cellar to garret; the host swore and despatched his servant-girls to the neighbours, and the hostess scolded her daughter, flattening her nose against the panes of a downstairs window to admire the handsome youth.

There were two tables in the principal eating-room. The provost took possession of one, leaving the other to the soldiers, who went in turn to tether their horses under a shed in the back yard; then he pointed to a stool for the prisoner, and seated himself opposite to him, rapping the table with his thick cane.

"Ouf!" he cried, with a fresh groan of weariness, "I heartily beg your pardon, marquis, for the bad wine I am giving you!"

The young man smiled gaily.

"The wine is all very well, monsieur provost," said he, "but I cannot conceal from you that however agreeable your company is to me, this halt is very inconvenient; I am in a hurry to get through my ridiculous situation, and I should have liked to arrive in time to stop this affair at once."

The girl of the house was standing before the table with a pewter pot which she had just brought, and at these words she raised her eyes on the prisoner, with a reassured look which seemed to say, "I was sure that he was innocent."

"But," continued the marquis, carrying the glass to his lips, "this wine is not so bad as you say, monsieur provost."

Then turning to the girl, who was eyeing his gloves and his ruff—

"To your health, pretty child."

"Then," said the provost, amazed at this free and easy air, "perhaps I shall have to beg you to excuse your sleeping quarters."

"What!" exclaimed the marquis, "do we sleep here?"

"My lord," said the provost, "we have sixteen long leagues to

make, our horses are done up, and so far as I am concerned I declare that I am no better than my horse."

The marquis knocked on the table, and gave every indication of being greatly annoyed. The provost meanwhile puffed and blowed, stretched out his big boots, and mopped his forehead with his handkerchief. He was a portly man, with a puffy face, whom fatigue rendered singularly uncomfortable.

"Marquis," said he, "although your company, which affords me the opportunity of showing you some attention, is very precious to me, you cannot doubt that I had much rather enjoy it on another footing. If it be within your power, as you say, to release yourself from the hands of justice, the sooner you do so the better I shall be pleased. But I beg you to consider the state we are in. For my part, I am unfit to keep the saddle another hour, and are you not yourself knocked up by this forced march in the great heat?"

"True, so I am," said the marquis, letting his arms fall by his side.

"Well, then, let us rest here, sup here, if we can, and we will start quite fit in the cool of the morning."

"Agreed," replied the marquis; "but then let us pass the time in a becoming manner. I have two pistoles left, let them be given to these good fellows to drink. It is only fair that I should treat them, seeing that I am the cause of giving them so much trouble."

He threw two pieces of money on the table of the soldiers, who cried in chorus, "Long live M. the marquis!" The provost rose, went to post sentinels, and then repaired to the kitchen, where he ordered the best supper that could be got. The men pulled out dice and began to drink and play. The marquis hummed an air in the middle of the room, twirled his moustache, turning on his heel and looking cautiously around; then he gently drew a purse from his trousers pocket, and as the daughter of the house was coming and going, he threw his arms round her neck as if to kiss her, and whispered, slipping ten louis into her hand—

"The key of the front door in my room, and a quart of liquor to the sentinels, and you save my life."

The girl went backwards nearly to the door, and returning with an expressive look, made an affirmative sign with her hand. The provost returned, and two hours later supper was served. He ate and drank like a man more at home at table than in the saddle. The marquis plied him with bumpers, and sleepiness, added to the fumes of a very heady wine, caused him to repeat over and over again—

"Confound it all, marquis, I can't believe you are such a blackguard as they say you are; you seem to me a jolly good sort."

The marquis thought he was ready to fall under the table, and was beginning to open negotiations with the daughter of the house, when, to his great disappointment, bedtime having come, the provoking provost called his sergeant, gave him instructions in an undertone, and announced that he should have the honour of conducting M. the marquis to bed, and that he should not go to bed himself before performing this duty. In fact, he posted three of his men, with torches, escorted the prisoner to his room, and left him with many profound bows.

The marquis threw himself on his bed without pulling off his boots, listening to a clock which struck nine. He heard the men come and go in the stables and in the yard.

An hour later, everybody being tired, all was perfectly still. The prisoner then rose softly, and felt about on tiptoe on the chimneypiece, on the furniture, and even in his clothes, for the key which he hoped to find. He could not find it. He could not be mistaken, nevertheless, in the tender interest of the young girl, and he could not believe that she was deceiving him. The marquis's room had a window which opened upon the street, and a door which gave access to a shabby gallery which did duty for a balcony, whence a staircase ascended to the principal rooms of the house. This gallery hung over the courtyard, being as high above it as the window was from the street. The marquis had only to jump over one side or the other: he hesitated for some time, and just as he was deciding to leap into the street, at the risk of breaking his neck, two taps were struck on the door. He jumped for joy, saying to himself as he opened, "I am saved!" A kind of shadow glided into the room; the

young girl trembled from head to foot, and could not say a word. The marquis reassured her with all sorts of caresses.

"Ah, sir," said she, "I am dead if we are surprised."

"Yes," said the marquis, "but your fortune is made if you get me out of here."

"God is my witness that I would with all my soul, but I have such a bad piece of news——"

She stopped, suffocated with varying emotions. The poor girl had come barefooted, for fear of making a noise, and appeared to be shivering.

"What is the matter?" impatiently asked the marquis.

"Before going to bed," she continued, "M. the provost has required from my father all the keys of the house, and has made him take a great oath that there are no more. My father has given him all: besides, there is a sentinel at every door; but they are very tired; I have heard them muttering and grumbling, and I have given them more wine than you told me."

"They will sleep," said the marquis, nowise discouraged, "and they have already shown great respect to my rank in not nailing me up in this room."

"There is a small kitchen garden," continued the girl, "on the side of the fields, fenced in only by a loose hurdle, but——"

"Where is my horse?"

"No doubt in the shed with the rest."

"I will jump into the yard."

"You will be killed."

"So much the better!"

"Ah! monsieur marquis, what have you done?" said the young girl with grief.

"Some foolish things! nothing worth mentioning; but my head and my honour are at stake. Let us lose no time; I have made up my mind."

"Stay," replied the girl, grasping his arm; "at the left-hand corner of the yard there is a large heap of straw, the gallery hangs just over it——"

"Bravo! I shall make less noise, and do myself less mischief."

He made a step towards the door; the girl, hardly knowing

what she was doing, tried to detain him; but he got loose from her and opened it. The moon was shining brightly into the yard; he heard no sound. He proceeded to the end of the wooden rail, and perceived the dungheap, which rose to a good height: the girl made the sign of the cross. The marquis listened once again, heard nothing, and mounted the rail. He was about to jump down, when by wonderful luck he heard murmurings from a deep voice. This proceeded from one of two horsemen, who were recommencing their conversation and passing between them a pint of wine. The marquis crept back to his door, holding his breath: the girl was awaiting him on the threshold.

"I told you it was not yet time," said she.

"Have you never a knife," said the marquis, 'to cut those rascals' throats with?"

"Wait, I entreat you, one hour, one hour only," murmured the young girl; "in an hour they will all be asleep."

The girl's voice was so sweet, the arms which she stretched towards him were full of such gentle entreaty, that the marquis waited, and at the end of an hour it was the young girl's turn to tell him to start.

The marquis for the last time pressed with his mouth those lips but lately so innocent, then he half opened the door, and heard nothing this time but dogs barking far away in an otherwise silent country. He leaned over the balustrade, and saw very plainly a soldier lying prone on the straw.

"If they were to awake?" murmured the young girl in accents of anguish.

"They will not take me alive, be assured," said the marquis.

"Adieu, then," replied she, sobbing; "may Heaven preserve you!"

He bestrode the balustrade, spread himself out upon it, and fell heavily on the dungheap. The young girl saw him run to the shed, hastily detach a horse, pass behind the stable wall, spur his horse in both flanks, tear across the kitchen garden, drive his horse against the hurdle, knock it down, clear it, and reach the highroad across the fields.

Bourdet, del. *Lafond, sculp.*

ESCAPE OF THE MARQUIS OF ST. MAIXENT

The poor girl remained at the end of the gallery, fixing her eyes on the sleeping sentry, and ready to disappear at the slightest movement. The noise made by spurs on the pavement and by the horse at the end of the courtyard had half awakened him. He rose, and suspecting some surprise, ran to the shed. His horse was no longer there; the marquis, in his haste to escape, had taken the first which came to hand, and this was the soldier's. Then the soldier gave the alarm; his comrades woke up. They ran to the prisoner's room, and found it empty. The provost came from his bed in a dazed condition. The prisoner had escaped.

Then the young girl, pretending to have been roused by the noise, hindered the preparations by mislaying the saddlery, impeding the horsemen instead of helping them; nevertheless, after a quarter of an hour, all the party were galloping along the road. The provost swore like a pagan. The best horses led the way, and the sentinel, who rode the marquis's, and who had a greater interest in catching the prisoner, far outstripped his companions; he was followed by the sergeant, equally well mounted, and as the broken fence showed the line he had taken, after some minutes they were in view of him, but at a great distance. However, the marquis was losing ground; the horse he had taken was the worst in the troop, and he had pressed it as hard as it could go. Turning in the saddle, he saw the soldiers half a musket-shot off; he urged his horse more and more, tearing his sides with his spurs; but shortly the beast, completely winded, foundered; the marquis rolled with it in the dust, but when rolling over he caught hold of the holsters, which he found to contain pistols; he lay flat by the side of the horse, as if he had fainted, with a pistol at full cock in his hand. The sentinel, mounted on a valuable horse, and more than two hundred yards ahead of his serafile, came up to him. In a moment the marquis, jumping up before he had time to resist him, shot him through the head; the horseman fell, the marquis jumped up in his place without even setting foot in the stirrup, started off at a gallop, and went away like the wind, leaving fifty yards behind him the non-

commissioned officer, dumbfounded with what had just passed before his eyes.

The main body of the escort galloped up, thinking that he was taken; and the provost shouted till he was hoarse, "Do not kill him!" But they found only the sergeant, trying to restore life to his man, whose skull was shattered, and who lay dead on the spot.

As for the marquis, he was out of sight; for, fearing a fresh pursuit, he had plunged into the cross roads, along which he rode a good hour longer at full gallop. When he felt pretty sure of having shaken the police off his track, and that their bad horses could not overtake him, he determined to slacken to recruit his horse; he was walking him along a hollow lane, when he saw a peasant approaching; he asked him the road to the Bourbonnais, and flung him a crown. The man took the crown and pointed out the road, but he seemed hardly to know what he was saying, and stared at the marquis in a strange manner. The marquis shouted to him to get out of the way; but the peasant remained planted on the roadside without stirring an inch. The marquis advanced with threatening looks, and asked how he dared to stare at him like that.

"The reason is," said the peasant, "that you have——" and he pointed to his shoulder and his ruff.

The marquis glanced at his dress, and saw that his coat was dabbled in blood, which, added to the disorder of his clothes and the dust with which he was covered, gave him a most suspicious aspect.

"I know," said he. "I and my servant have been separated in a scuffle with some drunken Germans; it's only a tipsy spree, and whether I have got scratched, or whether in collaring one of these fellows I have drawn some of his blood, it all arises from the row. I don't think I am hurt a bit." So saying, he pretended to feel all over his body.

"All the same," he continued, "I should not be sorry to have a wash; besides, I am dying with thirst and heat, and my horse is in no better case. Do you know where I can rest and refresh myself?"

The peasant offered to guide him to his own house, only a few yards off. His wife and children, who were working, respectfully stood aside, and went to collect what was wanted—wine, water, fruit, and a large piece of black bread. The marquis sponged his coat, drank a glass of wine, and called the people of the house, whom he questioned in an indifferent manner. He once more informed himself of the different roads leading into the Bourbonnais province, where he was going to visit a relative; of the villages, cross roads, distances; and finally he spoke of the country, the harvest, and asked what news there was.

The peasant replied, with regard to this, that it was surprising to hear of disturbances on the highway at this moment, when it was patrolled by detachments of mounted police, who had just made an important capture.

"Who is that?" asked the marquis.

"Oh," said the peasant, "a nobleman who has done a lot of mischief in the country."

"What! a nobleman in the hands of justice?"

"Just so; and he stands a good chance of losing his head."

"Do they say what he has done?"

"Shocking things; horrid things; everything he shouldn't do. All the province is exasperated with him."

"Do you know him?"

"No, but we all have his description."

As this news was not encouraging, the marquis, after a few more questions, saw to his horse, patted him, threw some more money to the peasant, and disappeared in the direction pointed out.

The provost proceeded half a league farther along the road; but coming to the conclusion that pursuit was useless, he sent one of his men to headquarters, to warn all the points of exit from the province, and himself returned with his troop to the place whence he had started in the morning. The marquis had relatives in the neighbourhood, and it was quite possible that he might seek shelter with some of them. All the village ran to meet the horsemen, who were obliged to confess that

they had been duped by the handsome prisoner. Different views were expressed on the event, which gave rise to much talking. The provost entered the inn, banging his fist on the furniture, and blaming everybody for the misfortune which had happened to him. The daughter of the house, at first a prey to the most grievous anxiety, had great difficulty in concealing her joy.

The provost spread his papers over the table, as if to nurse his ill-temper.

"The biggest rascal in the world!" he cried; "I ought to have suspected him."

"What a handsome man he was!" said the hostess.

"A consummate rascal! Do you know who he is? He is the Marquis de Saint-Maixent!"

"The Marquis de Saint-Maixent!" all cried with horror.

"Yes, the very man," replied the provost; "the Marquis de Saint-Maixent, accused, and indeed convicted, of coining and magic."

"Ah!"

"Convicted of incest."

"O my God!"

"Convicted of having strangled his wife to marry another, whose husband he had first stabbed."

"Heaven help us!" All crossed themselves.

"Yes, good people," continued the furious prevost, "this is the nice boy who has just escaped the king's justice!"

The host's daughter left the room, for she felt she was going to faint.

"But," said the host, "is there no hope of catching him again?"

"Not the slightest, if he has taken the road to the Bourbonnais; for I believe there are in that province noblemen belonging to his family who will not allow him to be rearrested."

The fugitive was, indeed, no other than the Marquis de Saint-Maixent, accused of all the enormous crimes detailed by the provost, who by his audacious flight opened for himself an active part in the strange story which it remains to relate.

It came to pass, a fortnight after these events, that a mounted

gentleman rang at the wicket gate of the chateau de Saint-Géran, at the gates of Moulins. It was late, and the servants were in no hurry to open. The stranger again pulled the bell in a masterful manner, and at length perceived a man running from the bottom of the avenue. The servant peered through the wicket, and making out in the twilight a very ill-appointed traveller, with a crushed hat, dusty clothes, and no sword, asked him what he wanted, receiving a blunt reply that the stranger wished to see the Count de Saint-Géran without any further loss of time. The servant replied that this was impossible; the other got into a passion.

"Who are you?" asked the man in livery.

"You are a very ceremonious fellow!" cried the horseman. "Go and tell M. de Saint-Géran that his relative, the Marquis de Saint-Maixent, wishes to see him at once."

The servant made humble apologies, and opened the wicket gate. He then walked before the marquis, called other servants, who came to help him to dismount, and ran to give his name in the count's apartments. The latter was about to sit down to supper when his relative was announced; he immediately went to receive the marquis, embraced him again and again, and gave him the most friendly and gracious reception possible. He wished then to take him into the dining-room to present him to all the family; but the marquis called his attention to the disorder of his dress, and begged for a few minutes' conversation. The count took him into his dressing-room, and had him dressed from head to foot in his own clothes, whilst they talked. The marquis then narrated a made-up story to M. de Saint-Géran relative to the accusation brought against him. This greatly impressed his relative, and gave him a secure footing in the chateau. When he had finished dressing, he followed the count, who presented him to the countess and the rest of the family.

It will now be in place to state who the inmates of the chateau were, and to relate some previous occurrences to explain subsequent ones.

The Marshal de Saint-Géran, of the illustrious house of Guiche,

and governor of the Bourbonnais, had married, for his first wife, Anne de Tournon, by whom he had one son, Claude de la Guiche, and one daughter, who married the Marquis de Bouillé. His wife dying, he married again with Suzanne des Epaules, who had also been previously married, being the widow of the Count de Longaunay, by whom she had Suzanne de Longaunay.

The marshal and his wife, Suzanne des Epaules, for the mutual benefit of their children by first nuptials, determined to marry them, thus sealing their own union with a double tie. Claude de Guiche, the marshal's son, married Suzanne de Longaunay.

This alliance was much to the distaste of the Marchioness de Bouillé, the marshal's daughter, who found herself separated from her stepmother, and married to a man who, it was said, gave her great cause for complaint, the greatest being his threescore years and ten.

The contract of marriage between Claude de la Guiche and Suzanne de Longaunay was executed at Rouen on the 17th of February 1619; but the tender age of the bridegroom, who was then but eighteen, was the cause of his taking a tour in Italy, whence he returned after two years. The marriage was a very happy one but for one circumstance—it produced no issue. The countess could not endure a barrenness which threatened the end of a great name, the extinction of a noble race. She made vows, pilgrimages; she consulted doctors and quacks; but to no purpose.

The Marshal de Saint-Géran died on the 10th of December 1632, having the mortification of having seen no descending issue from the marriage of his son. The latter, now Count de Saint-Géran, succeeded his father in the government of the Bourbonnais, and was named Chevalier of the King's Orders.

Meanwhile the Marchioness de Bouillé quarrelled with her old husband the marquis, separated from him after a scandalous divorce, and came to live at the chateau of Saint-Géran, quite at ease as to her brother's marriage, seeing that in default of heirs all his property would revert to her.

Such was the state of affairs when the Marquis de Saint-Maixent arrived at the chateau. He was young, handsome,

very cunning, and very successful with women; he even made a conquest of the dowager Countess de Saint-Géran, who lived there with her children. He soon plainly saw that he might easily enter into the most intimate relations with the Marchioness de Bouillé.

The Marquis de Saint-Maixent's own fortune was much impaired by his extravagance and by the exactions of the law, or rather, in plain words, he had lost it all. The marchioness was heiress presumptive to the count: he calculated that she would soon lose her own husband; in any case, the life of a septuagenarian did not much trouble a man like the marquis; he could then prevail upon the marchioness to marry him, thus giving him the command of the finest fortune in the province.

He set to work to pay his court to her, especially avoiding anything that could excite the slightest suspicion. It was, however, difficult to get on good terms with the marchioness without showing outsiders what was going on. But the marchioness, already prepossessed by the agreeable exterior of M. de Saint-Maixent, soon fell into his toils, and the unhappiness of her marriage, with the annoyances incidental to a scandalous case in the courts, left her powerless to resist his schemes. Nevertheless, they had but few opportunities of seeing one another alone: the countess innocently took a part in all their conversations; the count often came to take the marquis out hunting; the days passed in family pursuits. M. de Saint-Maixent had not so far had an opportunity of saying what a discreet woman ought to pretend not to hear; this intrigue, notwithstanding the marquis's impatience, dragged terribly.

The countess, as has been stated, had for twenty years never ceased to hope that her prayers would procure for her the grace of bearing a son to her husband. Out of sheer weariness she had given herself up to all kinds of charlatans, who at that period were well received by people of rank. On one occasion she brought from Italy a sort of astrologer, who as nearly as possible poisoned her with a horrible nostrum, and was sent back to his own country in a hurry, thanking his stars for having escaped so cheaply. This procured Madame

de Saint-Géran a severe reprimand from her confessor; and, as time went on, she gradually accustomed herself to the painful conclusion that she would die childless, and cast herself into the arms of religion. The count, whose tenderness for her never failed, yet clung to the hope of an heir, and made his Will with this end in view. The marchioness's hopes had become certainties, and M. de Saint-Maixent, perfectly tranquil on this head, thought only of forwarding his suit with Madame de Bouillé, when, at the end of the month of November 1640, the Count de Saint-Géran was obliged to repair to Paris in great haste on pressing duty.

The countess, who could not bear to be separated from her husband, took the family advice as to accompanying him. The marquis, delighted at an opportunity which left him almost alone in the chateau with Madame de Bouillé, painted the journey to Paris in the most attractive colours, and said all he could to decide her to go. The marchioness, for her part, worked very quietly to the same end; it was more than was needed. It was settled that the countess should go with M. de Saint-Géran. She soon made her preparations, and a few days later they set off on the journey together.

The marquis had no fears about declaring his passion; the conquest of Madame de Bouillé gave him no trouble; he affected the most violent love, and she responded in the same terms. All their time was spent in excursions and walks from which the servants were excluded; the lovers, always together, passed whole days in some retired part of the park, or shut up in their apartments. It was impossible for these circumstances not to cause gossip among an army of servants, against whom they had to keep incessantly on their guard; and this naturally happened.

The marchioness soon found herself obliged to make confidantes of the sisters Quinet, her maids; she had no difficulty in gaining their support, for the girls were greatly attached to her. This was the first step of shame for Madame de Bouillé, and the first step of corruption for herself and her paramour, who soon found themselves entangled in the blackest of plots. Moreover, there was at the chateau de Saint-Géran a tall, spare,

yellow, stupid man, just intelligent enough to perform, if not to conceive, a bad action, who was placed in authority over the domestics; he was a common peasant whom the old marshal had deigned to notice, and whom the count had by degrees promoted to the service of major-domo on account of his long service in the house, and because he had seen him there since he himself was a child; he would not take him away as body servant, fearing that his notions of service would not do for Paris, and left him to the superintendence of the household. The marquis had a quiet talk with this man, took his measure, warped his mind as he wished, gave him some money, and acquired him body and soul. These different agents undertook to stop the chatter of the servants' hall, and thenceforward the lovers could enjoy free intercourse.

One evening, as the Marquis de Saint-Maixent was at supper in company with the marchioness, a loud knocking was heard at the gate of the chateau, to which they paid no great attention. This was followed by the appearance of a courier who had come post haste from Paris; he entered the courtyard with a letter from the Count de Saint-Géran for M. the marquis; he was announced and introduced, followed by nearly all the household. The marquis asked the meaning of all this, and dismissed all the following with a wave of the hand; but the courier explained that M. the count desired that the letter in his hands should be read before everyone. The marquis opened it without replying, glanced over it, and read it out loud without the slightest alteration: the count announced to his good relations and to all his household that the countess had indicated positive symptoms of pregnancy; that hardly had she arrived in Paris when she suffered from fainting fits, nausea, retching, that she bore with joy these premonitory indications, which were no longer a matter of doubt to the physicians, nor to anyone; that for his part he was overwhelmed with joy at this event, which was the crowning stroke to all his wishes; that he desired the chateau to share his satisfaction by indulging in all kinds of gaieties; and that so far as other matters were concerned they could remain as they were till the return of

himself and the countess, which the letter would precede only a few days, as he was going to transport her in a litter for greater safety. Then followed the specification of certain sums of money to be distributed among the servants.

The servants uttered cries of joy; the marquis and marchioness exchanged a look, but a very troublous one; they, however, restrained themselves so far as to simulate a great satisfaction, and the marquis brought himself to congratulate the servants on their attachment to their master and mistress. After this they were left alone, looking very serious, while crackers exploded and violins resounded under the windows. For some time they preserved silence, the first thought which occurred to both being that the count and countess had allowed themselves to be deceived by trifling symptoms, that people had wished to flatter their hopes, that it was impossible for a constitution to change so suddenly after twenty years, and that it was a case of simulative pregnancy. This opinion gaining strength in their minds made them somewhat calmer.

The next day they took a walk side by side in a solitary path in the park and discussed the chances of their situation. M. de Saint-Maixent brought before the marchioness the enormous injury which this event would bring them. He then said that even supposing the news to be true, there were many rocks ahead to be weathered before the succession could be pronounced secure.

"The child may die," he said at last.

And he uttered some sinister expressions on the slight damage caused by the loss of a puny creature without mind, interest, or consequence; nothing, he said, but a bit of ill-organised matter, which only came into the world to ruin so considerable a person as the marchioness.

"But what is the use of tormenting ourselves?" he went on impatiently; "the countess is not pregnant, nor can she be."

A gardener working near them overheard this part of the conversation, but as they walked away from him he could not hear any more.

A few days later, some outriders, sent before him by the

count, entered the chateau, saying that their master and mistress were close at hand. In fact, they were promptly followed by brakes and travelling-carriages, and at length the countess's litter was descried, which M. de Saint-Géran, on horseback, had never lost sight of during the journey. It was a triumphal reception: all the peasants had left their work, and filled the air with shouts of welcome; the servants ran to meet their mistress; the ancient retainers wept for joy at seeing the count so happy and in the hope that his noble qualities might be perpetuated in his heir. The marquis and Madame de Bouillé did their best to tune up to the pitch of this hilarity.

The dowager countess, who had arrived at the chateau the same day, unable to convince herself as to this news, had the pleasure of satisfying herself respecting it. The count and countess were much beloved in the Bourbonnais province; this event caused therein a general satisfaction, particularly in the numerous houses attached to them by consanguinity. Within a few days of their return, more than twenty ladies of quality flocked to visit them in great haste, to show the great interest they took in this pregnancy. All these ladies, on one occasion or another, convinced themselves as to its genuineness, and many of them, carrying the subject still further, in a joking manner which pleased the countess, dubbed themselves prophetesses, and predicted the birth of a boy. The usual symptoms incidental to the situation left no room for doubt: the country physicians were all agreed. The count kept one of these physicians in the chateau for two months, and spoke to the Marquis of Saint-Maixent of his intention of procuring a good midwife, on the same terms. Finally, the dowager countess, who was to be sponsor, ordered at a great expense a magnificent store of baby linen, which she desired to present at the birth.

The marchioness devoured her rage, and among the persons who went beside themselves with joy not one remarked the disappointment which overspread her soul. Every day she saw the marquis, who did all he could to increase her regret, and incessantly stirred up her ill-humour by repeating that the count and countess were triumphing over her misfortune, and insinuating

that they were importing a supposititious child to disinherit her. As usual both in private and political affairs, he began by corrupting the marchioness's religious views, to pervert her into crime. The marquis was one of those libertines so rare at that time, a period less unhappy than is generally believed, who made science dependent upon atheism. It is remarkable that great criminals of this epoch, Sainte-Croix for instance, and Exili, the gloomy poisoner, were the first unbelievers, and that they preceded the learned of the following age both in philosophy and in the exclusive study of physical science, in which they included that of poisons. Passion, interest, hatred fought the marquis's battles in the heart of Madame de Bouillé; she readily lent herself to everything that M. de Saint-Maixent wished.

The Marquis de Saint-Maixent had a confidential servant, cunning, insolent, resourceful, whom he had brought from his estates, a servant well suited to such a master, whom he sent on errands frequently into the neighbourhood of Saint-Géran.

One evening, as the marquis was about to go to bed, this man, returning from one of his expeditions, entered his room, where he remained for a long time, telling him that he had at length found what he wanted, and giving him a small piece of paper which contained several names of places and persons.

Next morning, at daybreak, the marquis caused two of his horses to be saddled, pretended that he was summoned home on pressing business, foresaw that he should be absent for three or four days, made his excuses to the count, and set off at full gallop, followed by his servant.

They slept that night at an inn on the road to Auvergne, to put off the scent any persons who might recognise them; then, following cross-country roads, they arrived after two days at a large hamlet, which they had seemed to have passed far to their left.

In this hamlet was a woman who practised the avocation of midwife, and was known as such in the neighbourhood, but who had, it was said, mysterious and infamous secrets for those who paid her well. Further, she drew a good income from the influence which her art gave her over credulous people. It was all in her line to cure the king's evil, compound philtres and

love potions; she was useful in a variety of ways to girls who could afford to pay her; she was a lovers' go-between, and even practised sorcery for country folk. She played her cards so well, that the only persons privy to her misdeeds were unfortunate creatures who had as strong an interest as herself in keeping them profoundly secret; and as her terms were very high, she lived comfortably enough in a house her own property, and entirely alone, for greater security. In a general way, she was considered skilful in her ostensible profession, and was held in estimation by many persons of rank. This woman's name was Louise Goillard.

Alone one evening after curfew, she heard a loud knocking at the door of her house. Accustomed to receive visits at all hours, she took her lamp without hesitation, and opened the door. An armed man, apparently much agitated, entered the room. Louise Goillard, in a great fright, fell into a chair; this man was the Marquis de Saint-Maixent.

"Calm yourself, good woman," said the stranger, panting and stammering; "be calm, I beg; for it is I, not you, who have any cause for emotion. I am not a brigand, and far from your having anything to fear, it is I, on the contrary, who am come to beg for your assistance."

He threw his cloak into a corner, unbuckled his waistbelt, and laid aside his sword. Then falling into a chair, he said—

"First of all, let me rest a little."

The marquis wore a travelling-dress; but although he had not stated his name, Louise Goillard saw at a glance that he was a very different person from what she had thought, and that, on the contrary, he was some fine gentleman who had come on his love affairs.

"I beg you to excuse," said she, "a fear which is insulting to you. You came in so hurriedly that I had not time to see whom I was talking to. My house is rather lonely; I am alone; ill-disposed people might easily take advantage of these circumstances to plunder a poor woman who has little enough to lose. The times are so bad! You seem tired. Will you inhale some essence?"

"Give me only a glass of water."

Louise Goillard went into the adjoining room, and returned with an ewer. The marquis affected to rinse his lips, and said—

"I come from a great distance on a most important matter. Be assured that I shall be properly grateful for your services."

He felt in his pocket, and pulled out a purse, which he rolled between his fingers.

"In the first place, you must swear to the greatest secrecy."

"There is no need of that with us," said Louise Goillard; "that is the first condition of our craft."

"I must have more express guarantees, and your oath that you will reveal to no one in the world what I am going to confide to you."

"I give you my word, then, since you demand it; but I repeat that this is superfluous; you do not know me."

"Consider that this is a most serious matter, that I am as it were placing my head in your hands, and that I would lose my life a thousand times rather than see this mystery unravelled."

"Consider also," bluntly replied the midwife, "that we ourselves are primarily interested in all the secrets entrusted to us; that an indiscretion would destroy all confidence in us, and that there are even cases—— You may speak."

When the marquis had reassured her as to himself by this preface, he continued: "I know that you are a very able woman."

"I could indeed wish to be one, to serve you."

"That you have pushed the study of your art to its utmost limits."

"I fear they have been flattering your humble servant."

"And that your studies have enabled you to predict the future."

"That is all nonsense."

"It is true; I have been told so."

"You have been imposed upon."

"What is the use of denying it and refusing to do me a service?"

Louise Goillard defended herself long: she could not understand a man of this quality believing in fortune-telling, which she practised only with low-class people and rich farmers; but the marquis appeared so earnest that she knew not what to think.

"Listen," said he, "it is no use dissembling with me, I know all. Be easy; we are playing a game in which you are laying one against a thousand; moreover, here is something on account to compensate you for the trouble I am giving."

He laid a pile of gold on the table. The matron weakly owned that she had sometimes attempted astrological combinations which were not always fortunate, and that she had been only induced to do so by the fascination of the phenomena of science. The secret of her guilty practices was drawn from her at the very outset of her defence.

"That being so," replied the marquis, "you must be already aware of the situation in which I find myself; you must know that, hurried away by a blind and ardent passion, I have betrayed the confidence of an old lady and violated the laws of hospitality by seducing her daughter in her own house; that matters have come to a crisis, and that this noble damsel, whom I love to distraction, being pregnant, is on the point of losing her life and honour by the discovery of her fault, which is mine."

The matron replied that nothing could be ascertained about a person except from private questions; and to further impose upon the marquis, she fetched a kind of box marked with figures and strange emblems. Opening this, and putting together certain figures which it contained, she declared that what the marquis had told her was true, and that his situation was a most melancholy one. She added, in order to frighten him, that he was threatened by still more serious misfortunes than those which had already overtaken him, but that it was easy to anticipate and obviate these mischances by new consultations.

"Madame," replied the marquis, "I fear only one thing

in the world, the dishonour of the woman I love. Is there no method of remedying the usual embarrassment of a birth?"

"I know of none," said the matron.

"The young lady has succeeded in concealing her condition; it would be easy for her confinement to take place privately."

"She has already risked her life, and I cannot consent to be mixed up in this affair, for fear of the consequences."

"Could not, for instance," said the marquis, "a confinement be effected without pain?"

"I don't know about that, but this I do know, that I shall take very good care not to practise any method contrary to the laws of nature."

"You are deceiving me: you are acquainted with this method, you have already practised it upon a certain person whom I could name to you."

"Who has dared to calumniate me thus? I operate only after the decision of the Faculty. God forbid that I should be stoned by all the physicians, and perhaps expelled from France!"

"Will you then let me die of despair? If I were capable of making a bad use of your secrets, I could have done so long ago, for I know them. In Heaven's name, do not dissimulate any longer, and tell me how it is possible to stifle the pangs of labour. Do you want more gold? Here is it." And he threw more louis on the table.

"Stay," said the matron: "there is perhaps a method which I think I have discovered, and which I have never employed, but I believe it efficacious."

"But if you have never employed it, it may be dangerous, and risk the life of the lady whom I love."

"When I say never, I mean that I have tried it once, and most successfully. Be at your ease."

"Ah!" cried the marquis, "you have earned my everlasting gratitude! But," continued he, "if we could anticipate the confinement itself, and remove from henceforth the symptoms of pregnancy?"

"Oh, sir, that is a great crime that you speak of!"

"Alas!" continued the marquis, as if speaking to himself in a fit of intense grief, "I had rather lose a dear child, the pledge of our love, than bring into the world an unhappy creature which might possibly cause its mother's death."

"I pray you, sir, let no more be said on the subject; it is a horrible crime even to think of such a thing."

"But what is to be done? Is it better to destroy two persons and perhaps kill a whole family with despair? Oh, madame, I entreat you, extricate us from this extremity!"

The marquis buried his face in his hands, and sobbed as though he were weeping copiously.

"Your despair grievously affects me," said the matron; "but consider that for a woman of my calling it is a capital offence."

"What are you talking about? Do not our mystery, our safety, and our credit come in first? They can never get at you till after the death and dishonour of all that is dear to me in the world."

"I might then, perhaps—— But in this case you must insure me against legal complications, fines, and procure me a safe exit from the kingdom."

"Ah! that is my affair. Take my whole fortune! Take my life!"

And he threw the whole purse on the table.

"In this case, and solely to extricate you from the extreme danger in which I see you placed, I consent to give you a decoction, and certain instructions, which will instantly relieve the lady from her burden. She must use the greatest precaution, and study to carry out exactly what I am about to tell you. My God! only such desperate occasions as this one could induce me to—— Here——"

She took a flask from the bottom of a cupboard, and continued—

"Here is a liquor which never fails."

"Oh, madame, you save my honour, which is dearer to me than life! But this is not enough: tell me what use I am to make of this liquor, and in what doses I am to administer it."

"The patient," replied the midwife, "must take one spoonful the first day; the second day two; the third——"

"I shall never remember all that; write it out for me, I pray you, in my pocket-book."

The midwife hesitated for a moment; but the pocket-book when opened let fall a draft to bearer for five hundred francs; the marquis took this draft and presented it to her. "Here," said he, "since it has fallen out, it is not worth while replacing it."

This last present was so handsome as to allay all suspicions in the mind of the midwife, so she wrote the full instructions in the marquis's pocket-book.

The marquis put the bottle in his pocket; took the pocket-book, making sure that the instructions were fully given; then, turning to the midwife with a diabolical smile—

"And now, my darling," cried he, "you are completely in my power."

"What do you mean, sir?" demanded the astonished midwife.

"I mean," continued the marquis, "that you are an infamous sorceress and a miserable poisoner. I mean that I have proof of your crimes, and that now you shall do what I want or die at the stake."

"Mercy! mercy!" cried the matron, throwing herself at the feet of the marquis.

"Your fate is in my hands," coolly replied the marquis.

"Well, what must I do?" asked the midwife. "I am ready to do anything."

"Then it is my turn to tell you my secrets; only I shall not write them down."

"Name them, my lord, and you shall be satisfied with my devotion."

"Sit down, then, and listen to me."

The midwife rose and sank back into a chair.

"Now, then," said the marquis, "I see that you grasp the alternative: on one hand, prison, torture, the stake; on the other, three times as much gold as you have there; in short, ease and comfort for the rest of your life."

The midwife's eyes sparkled, and she thanked the marquis by a nod of the head, as if to show him that she was his, body and soul.

"There is," continued the marquis, fixing a piercing look in the eyes of the poor woman,—"there is in a chateau thirty leagues away a lady of high rank who is some months advanced in pregnancy. The birth of this child is hateful to me. You will be entrusted with the delivery. I will tell you what to do, and you will do all that I tell you. Now we must set out to-night. You will accompany me. I have horses not far from here, and will take you to a place where you will await my orders. You will be warned when the time comes. You will want for nothing, and all the money you require shall be forthcoming."

"I am ready," said the midwife curtly.

"You will obey me to the minutest particular?"

"I swear it."

"Let us start, then."

She asked but for time to pack a little linen, put things in order, then fastened her doors, and left the house with the marquis. A quarter of an hour later they were galloping through the night, without her knowing where the marquis was taking her.

The marquis reappeared three days later at the chateau, finding the count's family as he had left them—that is to say, intoxicated with hope, and counting the weeks, days, and hours before the accouchement of the countess. He excused his hurried departure on the ground of the importance of the business which had summoned him away; and speaking of his journey at table, he related a story current in the country whence he came, of a surprising event which he had all but witnessed himself. It was the case of a lady of quality who suddenly found herself in the most dangerous pangs of labour. All the skill of the physicians who had been summoned proved futile; the lady was at the point of death; at last, in sheer despair, they summoned a midwife of great repute among the peasantry, but whose practice did not include the gentry.

From the first treatment of this woman, who appeared modest and diffident to a degree, the pains ceased as if by enchantment; the patient fell into an indefinable calm languor, and after some hours was delivered of a beautiful infant; but after this was attacked by a violent fever which brought her to death's door. They then again had recourse to the doctors, notwithstanding the opposition of the master of the house, who had confidence in the matron. The doctors' treatment only made matters worse. In this extremity they again called in the midwife, and at the end of three weeks the lady was miraculously restored to life, thus, added the marquis, establishing the reputation of the matron, who had sprung into such vogue in the town where she lived and the neighbouring country that nothing else was talked about.

This story made a great impression on the company, on account of the condition of the countess; the dowager added that it was very wrong to ridicule these humble country experts, who often through observation and experience discovered secrets which proud doctors were unable to unravel with all their studies. Hereupon the count cried out that this midwife must be sent for, as she was just the kind of woman they wanted. After this other matters were talked about, the marquis changing the conversation; he had gained his point in quietly introducing the thin end of the wedge of his design.

After dinner, the company walked on the terrace. The countess dowager not being able to walk much on account of her advanced age, the countess and Madame de Bouillé took chairs beside her. The count walked up and down with M. de Saint-Maixent. The marquis naturally asked how things had been going on during his absence, and if Madame de Saint-Géran had suffered any inconvenience, for her pregnancy had become the most important affair in the household, and hardly anything else was talked about.

"By the way," said the count, "you were speaking just now of a very skilful midwife; would it not be a good step to summon her?"

"I think," replied the marquis, "that it would be an

excellent selection, for I do not suppose there is one in this neighbourhood to compare to her."

"I have a great mind to send for her at once, and to keep her about the countess, whose constitution she will be all the better acquainted with if she studies it beforehand. Do you know where I can send for her?"

"Faith," said the marquis, "she lives in a village, but I don't know which."

"But at least you know her name?"

"I can hardly remember it. Louise Boyard, I think, or Polliard, one or the other."

"How! have you not even retained the name?"

"I heard the story, that's all. Who the deuce can keep a name in his head which he hears in such a chance fashion?"

"But did the condition of the countess never occur to you?"

"It was so far away that I did not suppose you would send such a distance. I thought you were already provided."

"How can we set about to find her?"

"If that is all, I have a servant who knows people in that part of the country, and who knows how to go about things: if you like, he shall go in quest of her."

"If I like? This very moment."

The same evening the servant started on his errand with the count's instructions, not forgetting those of his master. He went at full speed. It may readily be supposed that he had not far to seek the woman he was to bring back with him; but he purposely kept away for three days, and at the end of this time Louise Goillard was installed in the chateau.

She was a woman of plain and severe exterior, who at once inspired confidence in everyone. The plots of the marquis and Madame de Bouillé thus throve with most baneful success; but an accident happened which threatened to nullify them, and, by causing a great disaster, to prevent a crime.

The countess, passing into her apartments, caught her foot in a carpet, and fell heavily on the floor. At the cries of a footman all the household was astir. The countess was carried to bed; the most intense alarm prevailed; but no bad

consequences followed this accident, which produced only a further succession of visits from the neighbouring gentry. This happened about the end of the seventh month.

At length the moment of accouchement came. Everything had long before been arranged for the delivery, and nothing remained to be done. The marquis had employed all this time in strengthening Madame de Bouillé against her scruples. He often saw Louise Goillard in private, and gave her his instructions; but he perceived that the corruption of Baulieu, the house steward, was an essential factor. Baulieu was already half gained over by the interviews of the year preceding; a large sum of ready money and many promises did the rest. This wretch was not ashamed to join a plot against a master to whom he owed everything. The marchioness for her part, and always under the instigation of M. de Saint-Maixent, secured matters all round by bringing into the abominable plot the Quinet girls, her maids; so that there was nothing but treason and conspiracy against this worthy family among their upper servants, usually styled confidential. Thus, having prepared matters, the conspirators awaited the event.

On the 16th of August 1641 the Countess de Saint-Géran was overtaken by the pangs of labour in the chapel of the chateau, where she was hearing mass. They carried her to her room before mass was over, her women ran around her, and the countess dowager with her own hands arranged on her head a cap of the pattern worn by ladies about to be confined—a cap which is not usually removed till some time later.

The pains recurred with terrible intensity. The count wept at his wife's cries. Many persons were present. The dowager's two daughters by her second marriage, one of whom, then sixteen years of age, afterwards married the Duke de Ventadour and was a party to the lawsuit, wished to be present at this accouchement, which was to perpetuate by a new scion an illustrious race near extinction. There were also Dame Saligny, sister of the late Marshal Saint-Géran, the Marquis de Saint-Maixent, and the Marchioness de Bouillé.

Everything seemed to favour the projects of these last two

persons, who took an interest in the event of a very different character from that generally felt. As the pains produced no result, and the accouchement was of the most difficult nature, while the countess was near the last extremity, expresses were sent to all the neighbouring parishes to offer prayers for the mother and the child; the Holy Sacrament was elevated in the churches at Moulins.

The midwife attended to everything herself. She maintained that the countess would be more comfortable if her slightest desires were instantly complied with. The countess herself never spoke a word, only interrupting the gloomy silence by heartrending cries. All at once, Madame de Bouillé, who affected to be bustling about, pointed out that the presence of so many persons was what hindered the countess's accouchement, and, assuming an air of authority justified by fictitious tenderness, said that everyone must retire, leaving the patient in the hands of the persons who were absolutely necessary to her, and that, to remove any possible objections, the countess dowager her mother must set the example. The opportunity was made use of to remove the count from this harrowing spectacle, and everyone followed the countess dowager. Even the countess's own maids were not allowed to remain, being sent on errands which kept them out of the way. This further reason was given, that the eldest being scarcely fifteen, they were too young to be present on such an occasion. The only persons remaining by the bedside were the Marchioness de Bouillé, the midwife, and the two Quinet girls; the countess was thus in the hands of her most cruel enemies.

It was seven o'clock in the evening; the labours continued; the elder Quinet girl held the patient by the hand to soothe her. The count and the dowager sent incessantly to know the news. They were told that everything was going on well, and that shortly their wishes would be accomplished; but none of the servants were allowed to enter the room.

Three hours later, the midwife declared that the countess could not hold out any longer unless she got some rest. She made her swallow a liquor which was introduced into her mouth

by spoonfuls. The countess fell into so deep a sleep that she seemed to be dead. The younger Quinet girl thought for a moment that they had killed her, and wept in a corner of the room, till Madame de Bouillé reassured her.

During this frightful night a shadowy figure prowled in the corridors, silently patrolled the rooms, and came now and then to the door of the bedroom, where he conferred in a low tone with the midwife and the Marchioness de Bouillé. This was the Marquis de Saint-Maixent, who gave his orders, encouraged his people, watched over every point of his plot, himself a prey to the agonies of nervousness which accompany the preparations for a great crime.

The dowager countess, owing to her great age, had been compelled to take some rest. The count sat up, worn out with fatigue, in a downstairs room hard by that in which they were compassing the ruin of all most dear to him in the world.

The countess, in her profound lethargy, gave birth, without being aware of it, to a boy, who thus fell on his entry into the world into the hands of his enemies, his mother powerless to defend him by her cries and tears. The door was half opened, and a man who was waiting outside brought in; this was the major-domo Baulieu.

The midwife, pretending to afford the first necessary cares to the child, had taken it into a corner. Baulieu watched her movements, and springing upon her, pinioned her arms. The wretched woman dug her nails into the child's head. He snatched it from her, but the poor infant for long bore the marks of her claws.

Possibly the Marchioness de Bouillé could not nerve herself to the commission of so great a crime; but it seems more probable that the steward prevented the destruction of the child under the orders of M. de Saint-Maixent. The theory is that the marquis, mistrustful of the promise made him by Madame de Bouillé to marry him after the death of her husband, desired to keep the child to oblige her to keep her word, under threats of getting him acknowledged, if she proved faithless to him. No other adequate reason can be conjectured

to determine a man of his character to take such great care of his victim.

Baulieu swaddled the child immediately, put it in a basket, hid it under his cloak, and went with his prey to find the marquis; they conferred together for some time, after which the house steward passed by a postern gate into the moat, thence to a terrace by which he reached a bridge leading into the park. This park had twelve gates, and he had the keys of all. He mounted a blood horse which he had left waiting behind a wall, and started off at full gallop. The same day he passed through the village of Escherolles, a league distant from Saint-Géran, where he stopped at the house of a nurse, wife of a glove-maker named Claude. This peasant woman gave her breast to the child; but the steward, not daring to stay in a village so near Saint-Géran, crossed the river Allier at the port de la Chaise, and calling at the house of a man named Boucaud, the good wife suckled the child for the second time; he then continued his journey in the direction of Auvergne.

The heat was excessive, his horse was done up, the child seemed uneasy. A carrier's cart passed him going to Riom; it was owned by a certain Paul Boithion of the town of Aigueperce, a common carrier on the road. Baulieu went alongside to put the child in the cart, which he entered himself, carrying the infant on his knees. The horse followed, fastened by the bridle to the back of the cart.

In the conversation which he held with this man, Baulieu said that he should not take so much care of the child did it not belong to the most noble house in the Bourbonnais. They reached the village of Ché at midday. The mistress of the house where he put up, who was nursing an infant, consented to give some of her milk to the child. The poor creature was covered with blood; she warmed some water, stripped off its swaddling linen, washed it from head to foot, and swathed it up again more neatly.

The carrier then took them to Riom. When they got there, Baulieu got rid of him by giving a false meeting-place for their departure; left in the direction of the abbey of Lavoine, and

reached the village of Descoutoux, in the mountains, between Lavoine and Thiers. The Marchioness de Bouillé had a chateau there where she occasionally spent some time.

The child was nursed at Descoutoux by Gabrielle Moini, who was paid a month in advance; but she only kept it a week or so, because they refused to tell her the father and mother and to refer her to a place where she might send reports of her charge. This woman having made these reasons public, no nurse could be found to take charge of the child, which was removed from the village of Descoutoux. The persons who removed it took the highroad to Burgundy, crossing a densely wooded country, and here they lost their way.

The above particulars were subsequently proved by the nurses, the carrier, and others who made legal depositions. They are stated at length here, as they proved very important in the great lawsuit. The compilers of the case, into which we search for information, have however omitted to tell us how the absence of the major-domo was accounted for at the castle; probably the far-sighted marquis had got an excuse ready.

The countess's state of drowsiness continued till daybreak. She woke bathed in blood, completely exhausted, but yet with a sensation of comfort which convinced her that she had been delivered from her burden. Her first words were about her child; she wished to see it, kiss it; she asked where it was. The midwife coolly told her, whilst the girls who were by were filled with amazement at her audacity, that she had not been confined at all. The countess maintained the contrary, and as she grew very excited, the midwife strove to calm her, assuring her that in any case her delivery could not be long protracted, and that, judging from all the indications of the night, she would give birth to a boy. This promise comforted the count and the countess dowager, but failed to satisfy the countess, who insisted that a child had been born.

The same day a scullery-maid met a woman going to the water's edge in the castle moat, with a parcel in her arms. She recognised the midwife, and asked what she was carrying and where she was going so early. The latter replied that she was

very inquisitive, and that it was nothing at all; but the girl, laughingly pretending to be angry at this answer, pulled open one of the ends of the parcel before the midwife had time to stop her, and exposed to view some linen soaked in blood.

"Madame has been confined, then?" she said to the matron.

"No," replied she briskly, "she has not."

The girl was unconvinced, and said, "How do you mean that she has not, when madame the marchioness, who was there, says she has?"

The matron in great confusion replied, "She must have a very long tongue, if she said so."

The girl's evidence was later found most important.

The countess's uneasiness made her worse the next day. She implored with sighs and tears at least to be told what had become of her child, steadily maintaining that she was not mistaken when she assured them that she had given birth to one. The midwife with great effrontery told her that the new moon was unfavourable to childbirth, and that she must wait for the wane, when it would be easier, as matters were already prepared.

Invalids' fancies do not obtain much credence; still, the persistence of the countess would have convinced everyone in the long run, had not the dowager said that she remembered at the end of the ninth month of one of her own pregnancies she had all the premonitory symptoms of lying in, but they proved false, and in fact the accouchement took place three months later.

This piece of news inspired great confidence. The marquis and Madame de Bouillé did all in their power to confirm it, but the countess obstinately refused to listen to it, and her passionate transports of grief gave rise to the greatest anxiety. The midwife, who knew not how to gain time, and was losing all hope in face of the countess's persistence, was almost frightened out of her wits; she entered into medical details, and finally said that some violent exercise must be taken to induce labour. The countess, still unconvinced, refused to obey this order; but the count, the dowager, and all the family entreated her so earnestly that she gave way.

They put her in a close carriage, and drove her a whole day over ploughed fields, by the roughest and hardest roads. She was so shaken that she lost the power of breathing; it required all the strength of her constitution to support this barbarous treatment in the delicate condition of a lady so recently confined. They put her to bed again after this cruel drive, and seeing that nobody took her view, she threw herself into the arms of Providence, and consoled herself by religion; the midwife administered violent remedies to deprive her of milk; she got over all these attempts to murder her, and slowly got better.

Time, which heals the deepest affliction, gradually soothed that of the countess; her grief nevertheless burst out periodically on the slightest cause; but eventually it died out, till the following events rekindled it.

There had been in Paris a fencing-master who used to boast that he had a brother in the service of a great house. This fencing-master had married a certain Marie Pigoreau, daughter of an actor. He had recently died in poor circumstances, leaving her a widow with two children. This woman Pigoreau did not enjoy the best of characters, and no one knew how she made a living, when all at once, after some short absences from home and visit from a man who came in the evening, his face muffled in his cloak, she launched out into a more expensive style of living; the neighbours saw in her house costly clothes, fine swaddling-clothes, and at last it became known that she was nursing a strange child.

About the same time it also transpired that she had a deposit of two thousand livres in the hands of a grocer in the quarter, named Raguenet; some days later, as the child's baptism had doubtless been put off for fear of betraying his origin, Pigoreau had him christened at St. Jean en Grève. She did not invite any of the neighbours to the function, and gave parents' names of her own choosing at the church. For godfather she selected the parish sexton, named Paul Marmiou, who gave the child the name of Bernard. La Pigoreau remained in a confessional during the ceremony, and gave the man ten sous. The godmother was Jeanne Chevalier, a poor woman of the parish.

The entry in the register was as follows :—

> " *On the seventh day of March one thousand six hundred and forty-two was baptized Bernard, son of . . . . and . . . . , his godfather being Paul Marmiou, day labourer and servant of this parish, and his godmother Jeanne Chevalier, widow of Pierre Thibou.*"

A few days afterwards la Pigoreau put out the child to nurse in the village of Torcy en Brie, with a woman who had been her godmother, whose husband was called Paillard. She gave out that it was a child of quality which had been entrusted to her, and that she should not hesitate, if such a thing were necessary, to save its life by the loss of one of her own children. The nurse did not keep it long, because she fell ill; la Pigoreau went to fetch the child away, lamenting this accident, and further saying that she regretted it all the more, as the nurse would have earned enough to make her comfortable for the rest of her life. She put the infant out again in the same village, with the widow of a peasant named Marc Péguin. The monthly wage was regularly paid, and the child brought up as one of rank. La Pigoreau further told the woman that it was the son of a great nobleman, and would later make the fortunes of those who served him. An elderly man, whom the people supposed to be the child's father, but who Pigoreau assured them was her brother-in-law, often came to see him.

When the child was eighteen months old, la Pigoreau took him away and weaned him. Of the two by her husband the elder was called Antoine, the second would have been called Henri if he had lived; but he was born on the 9th of August 1639, after the death of his father, who was killed in June of the same year, and died shortly after his birth. La Pigoreau thought fit to give the name and condition of this second son to the stranger, and thus bury for ever the secret of his birth. With this end in view, she left the quarter where she lived, and removed to conceal herself in another parish where she was not known. The child was brought up under the name and style of

Henri, second son of la Pigoreau, till he was two and a half years of age; but at this time, whether she was not engaged to keep it any longer, or whether she had spent the two thousand livres deposited with the grocer Raguenet, and could get no more from the principals, she determined to get rid of it.

Her gossips used to tell this woman that she cared but little for her eldest son, because she was very confident of the second one making his fortune, and that if she were obliged to give up one of them, she had better keep the younger, who was a beautiful boy. To this she would reply that the matter did not depend upon her; that the boy's godfather was an uncle in good circumstances, who would not charge himself with any other child. She often mentioned this uncle, her brother-in-law, she said, who was major-domo in a great house.

One morning, the hall porter at the hôtel de Saint-Géran came to Baulieu and told him that a woman carrying a child was asking for him at the wicket gate; this Baulieu was, in fact, the brother of the fencing-master, and godfather to Pigoreau's second son. It is now supposed that he was the unknown person who had placed the child of quality with her, and who used to go and see him at his nurse's. La Pigoreau gave him a long account of her situation. The major-domo took the child with some emotion, and told la Pigoreau to wait his answer a short distance off, in a place which he pointed out.

Baulieu's wife made a great outcry at the first proposal of an increase of family; but he succeeded in pacifying her by pointing out the necessities of his sister-in-law, and how easy and inexpensive it was to do this good work in such a house as the count's. He went to his master and mistress to ask permission to bring up this child in their hotel; a kind of feeling entered into the charge he was undertaking which in some measure lessened the weight on his conscience.

The count and countess at first opposed this project; telling him that having already five children he ought not to burden himself with any more, but he petitioned so earnestly that he obtained what he wanted. The countess wished to see it, and as she was about to start for Moulins she ordered it to be

put in her women's coach; when it was shown her, she cried out, "What a lovely child!"

The boy was fair, with large blue eyes and very regular features. She gave him a hundred caresses, which the child returned very prettily. She at once took a great fancy to him, and said to Baulieu, "I shall not put him in my women's coach; I shall put him in my own."

After they arrived at the chateau of Saint-Géran, her affection for Henri, the name retained by the child, increased day by day. She often contemplated him with sadness, then embraced him with tenderness, and kept him long on her bosom. The count shared this affection for the supposed nephew of Baulieu, who was adopted, so to speak, and brought up like a child of quality.

The Marquis de Saint-Maixent and Madame de Bouillé had not married, although the old Marquis de Bouillé had long been dead. It appeared that they had given up this scheme. The marchioness no doubt felt scruples about it, and the marquis was deterred from marriage by his profligate habits. It is moreover supposed that other engagements and heavy bribes compensated the loss he derived from the marchioness's breach of faith.

He was a man about town at that period, and was making love to the demoiselle Jacqueline de la Garde; he had succeeded in gaining her affections, and brought matters to such a point that she no longer refused her favours except on the grounds of her pregnancy and the danger of an indiscretion. The marquis then offered to introduce to her a matron who could deliver women without the pangs of labour, and who had a very successful practice. The same Jacqueline de la Garde further gave evidence at the trial that M. de Saint-Maixent had often boasted, as of a scientific intrigue, of having spirited away the son of a governor of a province and grandson of a marshal of France; that he spoke of the Marchioness de Bouillé, said that he had made her rich, and that it was to him she owed her great wealth; and further, that one day having taken her to a pretty country seat which belonged to him, she praised its beauty, saying "*c'était un beau lieu*"; he replied by a pun on a man's name, saying that

he knew another *Baulieu* who had enabled him to make a fortune of five hundred thousand crowns. He also said to Jadelon, sieur de la Barbesange, when posting with him from Paris, that the Countess de Saint-Géran had been delivered of a son who was in his power.

The marquis had not seen Madame de Bouillé for a long time; a common danger reunited them. They had both learned with terror the presence of Henri at the hotel de Saint-Géran. They consulted about this; the marquis undertook to cut the danger short. However, he dared put in practice nothing overtly against the child, a matter still more difficult just then, inasmuch as some particulars of his discreditable adventures had leaked out, and the Saint-Géran family received him more than coldly.

Baulieu, who witnessed every day the tenderness of the count and countess for the boy Henri, had been a hundred times on the point of giving himself up and confessing everything. He was torn to pieces with remorse. Remarks escaped him which he thought he might make without ulterior consequences, seeing the lapse of time, but they were noted and commented on. Sometimes he would say that he held in his hand the life and honour of Madame the Marchioness de Bouillé; sometimes that the count and countess had more reasons than they knew of for loving Henri. One day he put a case of conscience to a confessor, thus: "Whether a man who had been concerned in the abduction of a child could not satisfy his conscience by restoring him to his father and mother without telling them who he was?" What answer the confessor made is not known, but apparently it was not what the major-domo wanted. He replied to a magistrate of Moulins, who congratulated him on having a nephew whom his masters overburdened with kind treatment, that they ought to love him, since he was nearly related to them.

These remarks were noticed by others than those principally concerned. One day a wine merchant came to propose to Baulieu the purchase of a pipe of Spanish wine, of which he gave him a sample bottle; in the evening he was taken

violently ill. They carried him to bed, where he writhed, uttering horrible cries. One sole thought possessed him when his sufferings left him a lucid interval, and in his agony he repeated over and over again that he wished to implore pardon from the count and countess for a great injury which he had done them. The people round about him told him that was a trifle, and that he ought not to let it embitter his last moments, but he begged so piteously that he got them to promise that they should be sent for.

The count thought it was some trifling irregularity, some misappropriation in the house accounts; and fearing to hasten the death of the sufferer by the shame of the confession of a fault, he sent word that he heartily forgave him, that he might die tranquil, and refused to see him. Baulieu expired, taking his secret with him. This happened in 1648.

The child was then seven years old. His charming manners grew with his age, and the count and countess felt their love for him increase. They caused him to be taught dancing and fencing, put him into breeches and hose, and a page's suit of their livery, in which capacity he served them. The marquis turned his attack to this quarter. He was doubtless preparing some plot as criminal as the preceding, when justice overtook him for some other great crimes of which he had been guilty. He was arrested one day in the street when conversing with one of the Saint-Géran footmen, and taken to the Conciergerie of the Palace of Justice.

Whether owing to these occurrences, or to grounds for suspicion before mentioned, certain reports spread in the Bourbonnais embodying some of the real facts; portions of them reached the ears of the count and countess, but they had only the effect of renewing their grief without furnishing a clue to the truth.

Meanwhile, the count went to take the waters at Vichy. The countess and Madame de Bouillé followed him, and there they chanced to encounter Louise Goillard, the midwife. This woman renewed her acquaintance with the house, and in particular often visited the Marchioness de Bouillé. One day

the countess, unexpectedly entering the marchioness's room, found them both conversing in an undertone. They stopped talking immediately, and appeared disconcerted.

The countess noticed this without attaching any importance to it, and asked the subject of their conversation.

"Oh, nothing," said the marchioness.

"But what is it?" insisted the countess, seeing that she blushed.

The marchioness, no longer able to evade the question, and feeling her difficulties increase, replied—

"Dame Louise is praising my brother for bearing no ill-will to her."

"Why?" said the countess, turning to the midwife,—"why should you fear any ill-will on the part of my husband?"

"I was afraid," said Louise Goillard awkwardly, "that he might have taken a dislike to me on account of all that happened when you expected to be confined."

The obscurity of these words and embarrassment of the two women produced a lively effect upon the countess; but she controlled herself and let the subject drop. Her agitation, however, did not escape the notice of the marchioness, who the next day had horses put to her coach and retired to her estate of Lavoine. This clumsy proceeding strengthened suspicion.

The first determination of the countess was to arrest Louise Goillard; but she saw that in so serious a matter every step must be taken with precaution. She consulted the count and the countess dowager. They quietly summoned the midwife, to question her without any preliminaries. She prevaricated and contradicted herself over and over again; moreover, her state of terror alone sufficed to convict her of a crime. They handed her over to the law, and the Count de Saint-Géran filed an information before the vice-seneschal of Moulins.

The midwife underwent a first interrogatory. She confessed the truth of the accouchement, but she added that the countess had given birth to a still-born daughter, which she had buried under a stone near the step of the barn in the back yard. The judge, accompanied by a physician and a surgeon, repaired to

the place, where he found neither stone, nor fœtus, nor any indications of an interment. They searched unsuccessfully in other places.

When the dowager countess heard this statement, she demanded that this horrible woman should be put on her trial. The civil lieutenant, in the absence of the criminal lieutenant, commenced the proceedings.

In a second interrogation, Louise Goillard positively declared that the countess had never been confined;

In a third, that she had been delivered of a mole;

In a fourth, that she had been confined of a male infant, which Baulieu had carried away in a basket;

And in a fifth, in which she answered from the dock, she maintained that her evidence of the countess's accouchement had been extorted from her by violence. She made no charges against either Madame de Bouillé or the Marquis de Saint-Maixent. On the other hand, no sooner was she under lock and key than she despatched her son Guillemin to the marchioness to inform her that she was arrested. The marchioness recognised how threatening things were, and was in a state of consternation; she immediately sent the sieur de la Foresterie, her steward, to the lieutenant-general, her counsel, a mortal enemy of the count, that he might advise her in this conjuncture, and suggest a means for helping the matron without appearing openly in the matter. The lieutenant's advice was to quash the proceedings and obtain an injunction against the continuance of the preliminaries to the action. The marchioness spent a large sum of money, and obtained this injunction; but it was immediately reversed, and the bar to the suit removed.

La Foresterie was then ordered to pass to Riom, where the sisters Quinet lived, and to bribe them heavily to secrecy. The elder one, on leaving the marchioness's service, had shaken her fist in her face, feeling secure with the secrets in her knowledge, and told her that she would repent having dismissed her and her sister, and that she would make a clean breast of the whole affair, even were she to be hung first. These girls then sent word that they wished to enter her service again; that the

countess had promised them handsome terms if they would speak; and that they had even been questioned in her name by a Capuchin superior, but that they said nothing, in order to give time to prepare an answer for them. The marchioness found herself obliged to take back the girls; she kept the younger, and married the elder to Delisle, her house steward.

But la Foresterie, finding himself in this network of intrigue, grew disgusted at serving such a mistress, and left her house. The marchioness told him on his departure that if he were so indiscreet as to repeat a word of what he had learned from the Quinet girls, she would punish him with a hundred poniard stabs from her major-domo Delisle. Having thus fortified her position, she thought herself secure against any hostile steps; but it happened that a certain Prudent Berger, gentleman and page to the Marquis de Saint-Maixent, who enjoyed his master's confidence and went to see him in the Conciergerie, where he was imprisoned, threw some strange light on this affair. His master had narrated to him all the particulars of the accouchement of the countess and of the abduction of the child.

"I am astonished, my lord," replied the page, "that having so many dangerous affairs on hand, you did not relieve your conscience of this one."

"I intend," replied the marquis, "to restore this child to his father: I have been ordered to do so by a Capuchin to whom I confessed having carried off from the midst of the family, without their knowing it, a grandson of a marshal of France and son of a governor of a province."

The marquis had at that time permission to go out from prison occasionally on his parole. This will not surprise anyone acquainted with the ideas which prevailed at that period on the honour of a nobleman, even the greatest criminal. The marquis, profiting by this facility, took the page to see a child of about seven years of age, fair and with a beautiful countenance.

"Page," said he, "look well at this child, so that you may know him again when I shall send you to inquire about him."

He then informed him that this was the Count de Saint-Géran's son whom he had carried away.

Information of these matters coming to the ears of justice, decisive proofs were hoped for; but this happened just when other criminal informations were lodged against the marquis, which left him helpless to prevent the exposure of his crimes. Police officers were despatched in all haste to the Conciergerie; they were stopped by the gaolers, who told them that the marquis, feeling ill, was engaged with a priest who was administering the sacrament to him. As they insisted on seeing him, the warders approached the cell: the priest came out, crying that persons must be sought to whom the sick man had a secret to reveal; that he was in a desperate state, and said he had just poisoned himself; all entered the cell.

M. de Saint-Maixent was writhing on a pallet, in a pitiable condition, sometimes shrieking like a wild beast, sometimes stammering disconnected words. All that the officers could hear was—

"Monsieur le Comte . . . call . . . the Countess . . . de Saint-Géran . . . let them come. . . ." The officers earnestly begged him to try to be more explicit.

The marquis had another fit; when he opened his eyes, he said—

"Send for the countess . . . let them forgive me . . . I wish to tell them everything." The police officers asked him to speak; one even told him that the count was there. The marquis feebly murmured—

"I am going to tell you——" Then he gave a loud cry and fell back dead.

It thus seemed as if fate took pains to close every mouth from which the truth might escape. Still, this avowal of a deathbed revelation to be made to the Count de Saint-Géran and the deposition of the priest who had administered the last sacraments formed a strong link in the chain of evidence.

The judge of first instruction, collecting all the information he had got, made a report the weight of which was overwhelming. The carters, the nurses, the domestic servants, all gave

accounts consistent with each other; the route and the various adventures of the child were plainly detailed, from its birth till its arrival at the village of Descoutoux.

Justice, thus tracing crime to its sources, had no option but to issue a warrant for the arrest of the Marchioness de Bouillé; but it seems probable that it was not served owing to the strenuous efforts of the Count de Saint-Géran, who could not bring himself to ruin his sister, seeing that her dishonour would have been reflected on him. The marchioness hid her remorse in solitude, and appeared again no more. She died shortly after, carrying the weight of her secret till she drew her last breath.

The judge of Moulins at length pronounced sentence on the midwife, whom he declared arraigned and convicted of having suppressed the child born to the countess; for which he condemned her to be tortured and then hanged. The matron lodged an appeal against this sentence, and the case was referred to the Conciergerie.

No sooner had the count and countess seen the successive proofs of the procedure, than tenderness and natural feelings accomplished the rest. They no longer doubted that their page was their son; they stripped him at once of his livery and gave him his rank and prerogatives, under the title of the Count de la Palice.

Meanwhile, a private person named Séqueville informed the countess that he had made a very important discovery; that a child had been baptized in 1642 at St. Jean-en-Grève, and that a woman named Marie Pigoreau had taken a leading part in the affair. Thereupon inquiries were made, and it was discovered that this child had been nursed in the village of Torcy. The count obtained a warrant which enabled him to get evidence before the judge of Torcy; nothing was left undone to elicit the whole truth; he also obtained a warrant through which he obtained more information, and published a monitory. The elder of the Quinet girls on this told the Marquis de Canillac that the count was searching at a distance for things very near him. The truth shone out with great

lustre through these new facts which gushed from all this fresh information. The child, exhibited in the presence of a legal commissary to the nurses and witnesses of Torcy, was identified, as much by the scars left by the midwife's nails on his head, as by his fair hair and blue eyes. This ineffaceable vestige of the woman's cruelty was the principal proof; the witnesses testified that la Pigoreau, when she visited this child with a man who appeared to be of condition, always asserted that he was the son of a great nobleman who had been entrusted to her care, and that she hoped he would make her fortune and that of those who had reared him.

The child's godfather, Paul Marmiou, a common labourer; the grocer Raguenet, who had charge of the two thousand livres; the servant of la Pigoreau, who had heard her say that the count was obliged to take this child; the witnesses who proved that la Pigoreau had told them that the child was too well born to wear a page's livery, all furnished convincing proofs; but others were forthcoming.

It was at la Pigoreau's that the Marquis de Saint-Maixent, living then at the hotel de Saint-Géran, went to see the child, kept in her house as if it were hers; Prudent Berger, the marquis's page, perfectly well remembered la Pigoreau, and also the child, whom he had seen at her house and whose history the marquis had related to him. Finally, many other witnesses heard in the course of the case, both before the three chambers of nobles, clergy, and the tiers état, and before the judges of Torcy, Cusset, and other local magistrates, made the facts so clear and conclusive in favour of the legitimacy of the young count, that it was impossible to avoid impeaching the guilty parties. The count ordered the summons in person of la Pigoreau, who had not been compromised in the original preliminary proceedings. This drastic measure threw the intriguing woman on her beam ends, but she strove hard to right herself.

The widowed Duchess de Ventadour, daughter by her mother's second marriage of the Countess dowager of Saint-Géran, and half-sister of the count, and the Countess de Lude,

daughter of the Marchioness de Bouillé, from whom the young count carried away the Saint-Géran inheritance, were very warm in the matter, and spoke of disputing the judgment. La Pigoreau went to see them, and joined in concert with them.

Then commenced this famous lawsuit, which long occupied all France, and is parallel in some respects, but not in the time occupied in the hearing, to the case heard by Solomon, in which one child was claimed by two mothers.

The Marquis de Saint-Maixent and Madame de Bouillé being dead, were naturally no parties to the suit, which was fought against the Saint-Géran family by la Pigoreau and Mesdames du Lude and de Ventadour. These ladies no doubt acted in good faith, at first at any rate, in refusing to believe the crime; for if they had originally known the truth it is incredible that they could have fought the case so long and so obstinately.

They first of all went to the aid of the midwife, who had fallen sick in prison; they then consulted together, and resolved as follows:—

That the accused should appeal against criminal proceedings;

That la Pigoreau should lodge a civil petition against the judgments which ordered her arrest and the confronting of witnesses;

That they should appeal against the abuse of obtaining and publishing monitories, and lodge an interpleader against the sentence of the judge of first instruction, who had condemned the matron to capital punishment;

And that finally, to carry the war into the enemy's camp, la Pigoreau should impugn the maternity of the countess, claiming the child as her own; and that the ladies should depose that the countess's accouchement was an imposture invented to cause it to be supposed that she had given birth to a child.

For more safety and apparent absence of collusion, Mesdames du Lude and de Ventadour pretended to have no communication with la Pigoreau.

About this time the midwife died in prison, from an illness which vexation and remorse had aggravated. After her death, her son Guillemin confessed that she had often told him that

the countess had given birth to a son whom Baulieu had carried off, and that the child entrusted to Baulieu at the chateau Saint-Géran was the same as the one recovered; the youth added that he had concealed this fact so long as it might injure his mother, and he further stated that the ladies de Ventadour and du Lude had helped her in prison with money and advice—another strong piece of presumptive evidence.

The petitions of the accused and the interpleadings of Mesdames du Lude and de Ventadour were discussed in seven hearings, before three courts convened. The suit proceeded with all the languor and chicanery of the period.

After long and specious arguments, the attorney-general Bijnon gave his decision in favour of the Count and Countess of Saint-Géran, concluding thus:—

"The court rejects the civil appeal of la Pigoreau, and all the opposition and appeals of the appellants and the defendants; condemns them to fine and in costs; and seeing that the charges against la Pigoreau were of a serious nature, and that a personal summons had been decreed against her, orders her committal, recommending her to the indulgence of the court."

By a judgment given in a sitting at the Tournelle by M. de Mesmes, on the 18th of August 1657, the appellant ladies' and the defendants' opposition was rejected with fine and costs. La Pigoreau was forbidden to leave the city and suburbs of Paris under penalty of summary conviction. The judgment in the case followed the rejection of the appeal.

This reverse at first extinguished the litigation of Mesdames du Lude and de Ventadour, but it soon revived more briskly than ever. These ladies, who had taken la Pigoreau in their coach to all the hearings, prompted her, in order to procrastinate, to file a fresh petition, in which she demanded the confrontment of all the witnesses to the pregnancy and the confinement. On hearing this petition, the court gave on the 28th of August 1658 a decree ordering this confrontment, but on condition that for three days previously la Pigoreau should deliver herself a prisoner in the Conciergerie.

This judgment, the consequences of which greatly alarmed

la Pigoreau, produced such an effect upon her that, after having weighed the interest she had in the suit, which she would lose by flight, against the danger to her life if she ventured her person into the hands of justice, she abandoned her false plea of maternity, and took refuge abroad. This last circumstance was a heavy blow to Mesdames du Lude and de Ventadour; but they were not at the end of their resources and their obstinacy.

Contempt of court being decreed against la Pigoreau, and the case being got up against the other defendants, the Count de Saint-Géran left for the Bourbonnais, to put in execution the order to confront the witnesses. Scarcely had he arrived in the province when he was obliged to interrupt his work to receive the king and the queen mother, who were returning from Lyons and passing through Moulins. He presented the Count de la Palice to their Majesties as his son; they received him as such. But during the visit of the king and queen the Count de Saint-Géran fell ill, over fatigued, no doubt, by the trouble he had taken to give them a suitable reception, over and above the worry of his own affairs.

During his illness, which only lasted a week, he made in his will a new acknowledgment of his son, naming as executors M. de Barrière, intendant of the province, and the sieur Vialet, treasurer of France, desiring them to bring the lawsuit to an end. His last words were for his wife and child; his only regret that he had not been able to terminate this affair. He died on the 31st of January 1659.

The maternal tenderness of the countess did not need stimulating by the injunctions of her husband, and she took up the suit with energy. The ladies de Ventadour and du Lude obtained by default letters of administration as heiresses without liability, which were granted out of the Châtelet. At the same time they appealed against the judgment of the lieutenant-general of the Bourbonnais, giving the tutelage of the young count to the countess his mother, and his guardianship to sieur de Bompré. The countess, on her side, interpleaded an appeal against the granting of letters of administration without liability, and did all in her power to bring back the case to the Tournelle.

The other ladies carried their appeal to the high court, pleading that they were not parties to the lawsuit in the Tournelle.

It would serve no purpose to follow the obscure labyrinth of legal procedure of that period, and to recite all the marches and countermarches which legal subtlety suggested to the litigants. At the end of three years, on the 9th of April 1661, the countess obtained a judgment by which the king in person—

> "*Assuming to his own decision the civil suit pending at the Tournelle, as well as the appeals pled by both parties, and the last petition of Mesdames du Lude and de Ventadour, sends back the whole case to the three assembled chambers of the States General, to be by them decided on its merits either jointly or separately, as they may deem fit.*"

The countess thus returned to her first battlefield. Legal science produced an immense quantity of manuscript, barristers and attorneys greatly distinguishing themselves in their calling. After an interminable hearing, and pleadings longer and more complicated than ever, which however did not bamboozle the court, judgment was pronounced in conformity with the summing up of the attorney-general, thus:—

"That passing over the petition of Mesdames Marie de la Guiche and Eléonore de Bouillé, on the grounds," etc. etc.;

"Evidence taken," etc.;

"Appeals, judgments annulled," etc.;

"With regard to the petition of the late Claude de la Guiche and Suzanne de Longaunay, dated 12th August 1658,"

"Ordered,

"That the rule be made absolute;

"Which being done, Bernard de la Guiche is pronounced, maintained, and declared the lawfully born and legitimate son of Claude de la Guiche and Suzanne de Longaunay; in possession and enjoyment of the name and arms of the house of Guiche, and of all the goods left by Claude de la Guiche, his father; and Marie de la Guiche and Eléonore de Bouillé are interdicted from interfering with him;

"The petitions of Eléonore de Bouillé and Marie de la Guiche, dated 4th June 1664, 4th August 1665, 6th January, 10th February, 12th March, 15th April, and 2nd June, 1666, are dismissed with costs;

"Declared,

"That the defaults against la Pigoreau are confirmed; and that she, arraigned and convicted of the offences imputed to her, is condemned to be hung and strangled at a gallows erected in the Place de Grève in this city, if taken and apprehended; otherwise, in effigy at a gallows erected in the Place de Grève aforesaid; that all her property subject to confiscation is seized and confiscated from whomsoever may be in possession of it; on which property and other not subject to confiscation, is levied a fine of eight hundred Paris livres, to be paid to the King, and applied to the maintenance of prisoners in the Conciergerie of the Palace of Justice, and to the costs."

Possibly a more obstinate legal contest was never waged, on both sides, but especially by those who lost it. The countess, who played the part of the true mother in the Bible, had the case so much to heart that she often told the judges, when pleading her cause, that if her son were not recognised as such, she would marry him, and convey all her property to him.

The young Count de la Palice became Count de Saint-Géran through the death of his father, married, in 1667, Claude Françoise Madeleine de Farignies, only daughter of François de Monfreville and of Marguerite Jourdain de Carbone de Canisi. He had only one daughter, born in 1688, who became a nun. He died at the age of fifty-five years, and thus this illustrious family became extinct.

END OF VOL. I.

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